

# SIGHT AND SOUND

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INDEX TO SIGHT AND SOUND  
JANUARY 1964—DECEMBER 1964  
Volume 33 Nos. 1-4

INDEX TO CONTRIBUTORS

Page	Contributor	Page	Contributor
112	MANCINI, Michele	112	ALDRICH, Robert
113	MANCINI, Michele	113	ANTONINI, Alessandro
114	MANCINI, Michele	114	ARDA, John
115	MANCINI, Michele	115	BACHMAN, George
116	MANCINI, Michele	116	BRUNO, James
117	MANCINI, Michele	117	CASATI, Carlo
118	MANCINI, Michele	118	CLAYTON, Peter
119	MANCINI, Michele	119	COOPER, Roger
120	MANCINI, Michele	120	DAVIS, George
121	MANCINI, Michele	121	DELO, Paul
122	MANCINI, Michele	122	DE RO, John
123	MANCINI, Michele	123	DONNER, John
124	MANCINI, Michele	124	DYER, John
125	MANCINI, Michele	125	FERRELL, John
126	MANCINI, Michele	126	GILBERT, John
127	MANCINI, Michele	127	GODDARD, John
128	MANCINI, Michele	128	HARCOULT, John
129	MANCINI, Michele	129	HUGHES, John
130	MANCINI, Michele	130	HUSTON, John
131	MANCINI, Michele	131	JACOB, John
132	MANCINI, Michele	132	JARVIS, John
133	MANCINI, Michele	133	KUHN, John
134	MANCINI, Michele	134	KUSTOW, John
135	MANCINI, Michele	135	LANE, John
136	MANCINI, Michele	136	LOVE, John
137	MANCINI, Michele	137	LOVE, John
138	MANCINI, Michele	138	LOVE, John
139	MANCINI, Michele	139	LOVE, John
140	MANCINI, Michele	140	LOVE, John
141	MANCINI, Michele	141	LOVE, John
142	MANCINI, Michele	142	LOVE, John
143	MANCINI, Michele	143	LOVE, John
144	MANCINI, Michele	144	LOVE, John
145	MANCINI, Michele	145	LOVE, John
146	MANCINI, Michele	146	LOVE, John
147	MANCINI, Michele	147	LOVE, John
148	MANCINI, Michele	148	LOVE, John
149	MANCINI, Michele	149	LOVE, John
150	MANCINI, Michele	150	LOVE, John
151	MANCINI, Michele	151	LOVE, John
152	MANCINI, Michele	152	LOVE, John
153	MANCINI, Michele	153	LOVE, John
154	MANCINI, Michele	154	LOVE, John
155	MANCINI, Michele	155	LOVE, John
156	MANCINI, Michele	156	LOVE, John
157	MANCINI, Michele	157	LOVE, John
158	MANCINI, Michele	158	LOVE, John
159	MANCINI, Michele	159	LOVE, John
160	MANCINI, Michele	160	LOVE, John
161	MANCINI, Michele	161	LOVE, John
162	MANCINI, Michele	162	LOVE, John
163	MANCINI, Michele	163	LOVE, John
164	MANCINI, Michele	164	LOVE, John
165	MANCINI, Michele	165	LOVE, John
166	MANCINI, Michele	166	LOVE, John
167	MANCINI, Michele	167	LOVE, John
168	MANCINI, Michele	168	LOVE, John
169	MANCINI, Michele	169	LOVE, John
170	MANCINI, Michele	170	LOVE, John
171	MANCINI, Michele	171	LOVE, John
172	MANCINI, Michele	172	LOVE, John
173	MANCINI, Michele	173	LOVE, John
174	MANCINI, Michele	174	LOVE, John
175	MANCINI, Michele	175	LOVE, John
176	MANCINI, Michele	176	LOVE, John
177	MANCINI, Michele	177	LOVE, John
178	MANCINI, Michele	178	LOVE, John
179	MANCINI, Michele	179	LOVE, John
180	MANCINI, Michele	180	LOVE, John
181	MANCINI, Michele	181	LOVE, John
182	MANCINI, Michele	182	LOVE, John
183	MANCINI, Michele	183	LOVE, John
184	MANCINI, Michele	184	LOVE, John
185	MANCINI, Michele	185	LOVE, John
186	MANCINI, Michele	186	LOVE, John
187	MANCINI, Michele	187	LOVE, John
188	MANCINI, Michele	188	LOVE, John
189	MANCINI, Michele	189	LOVE, John
190	MANCINI, Michele	190	LOVE, John
191	MANCINI, Michele	191	LOVE, John
192	MANCINI, Michele	192	LOVE, John
193	MANCINI, Michele	193	LOVE, John
194	MANCINI, Michele	194	LOVE, John
195	MANCINI, Michele	195	LOVE, John
196	MANCINI, Michele	196	LOVE, John
197	MANCINI, Michele	197	LOVE, John
198	MANCINI, Michele	198	LOVE, John
199	MANCINI, Michele	199	LOVE, John
200	MANCINI, Michele	200	LOVE, John

# Sight and Sound

JANUARY 1964

DECEMBER 1964

Volume 33



# INDEX TO SIGHT AND SOUND

## JANUARY 1964—DECEMBER 1964

Volume 33 Nos. 1-4

### INDEX TO CONTRIBUTORS

Page

ALDRICH, Robert	21	MANCEAUX, Michèle	118
What Ever Happened to American Movies? (In the Picture)	...	In the Red Desert ...	...
ANTONIONI, Michelangelo	14	MARCORELLES, Louis	74
The Event and the Image ...	...	Paris Notes (In the Picture) ...	...
ARDAGH, John	173	MICHALEK, Boleslaw	124
Huston in Eden ...	...	Warsaw Notes (In the Picture) ...	...
BACHMANN, Gideon	82	MILNE, Tom	11
Interview with Federico Fellini ...	...	London Festival: Indirections ...	...
BRUNIUS, Jacques	208	Dr. Strangelove (Film Review) ...	37
Cinema Eye, Cinema Ear, by John Russell Taylor (Book Review) ...	...	The Balcony (Film Review) ...	40
CASTELLO, Giulio Cesare	23	How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Stanley Kubrick ...	68
Italian Notes (In the Picture) ...	...	Night Must Fall (Film Review) ...	144
Crisis in Rome ...	171	Le Cinéma Moderne, by Gilles Jacob (Book Review) ...	154
CLAYBURN, Peter	123	The Two Chambermaids ...	174
Chanbara (In the Picture) ...	...	Festivals '64: Venice ...	186
CORMAN, Roger	66	Lord of the Flies (Film Review) ...	194
Ten Questions: The Stranger ...	...	NOWELL-SMITH, Geoffrey	15
DAVIES, Brenda	41	Shape Around a Black Point ...	102
Cronaca Familiare (Film Review) ...	49	Magazines (Book Review) ...	130
International Film Guide (Book Review) ...	99	Through the Looking Glass ...	196
Can the Leopard ...?	146	A Hard Day's Night (Film Review) ...	...
Girl with Green Eyes (Film Review) ...	196	OLMI, Ermanno	63
Love with the Proper Stranger (Film Review) ...	209	Ten Questions: I Fidanzati ...	...
Cinema, by Thomas Wiseman (Book Review) ...	...	PECHTER, William S.	4
DELSOL, Paule	65	Trials ...	148
Ten Questions: La Dérive ...	...	On Agee on Film ...	...
DE ROME, Peter	42	PLAYFAIR, Guy	169
Off-Broadway Cinema ...	...	Festivals and a Revolution (In the Picture) ...	...
DONNER, Clive	64	RHODE, Eric	44
Ten Questions: The Caretaker ...	...	The Day of the Butterfly ...	195
DYER, Peter John	97	Devil (Film Review) ...	...
Mamma Roma (Film Review) ...	125	RICHEL, Donald	108
Fugitive from Murder ...	146	Kurosawa on Kurosawa: Part One ...	200
Seance on a Wet Afternoon (Film Review) ...	179	Kurosawa on Kurosawa: Part Two ...	...
Z Films ...	199	ROBINSON, David	36
Marnie (Film Review) ...	...	The Leopard (Film Review) ...	...
FENWICK, J. H.	97	Movement in Two Dimensions, by Olive Cook and Le Boulevard du	48
Sex Can be Difficult and I Nuovi Angeli (Film Reviews) ...	114	Cinéma, by Jacques Deslandes (Book Reviews) ...	95
Black King Takes Two ...	197	Le Soupirant and The Pink Panther (Film Reviews) ...	188
The Unsinkable Molly Brown (Film Review) ...	...	Conversation with George Cukor ...	206
GILLETT, John	40	My Autobiography, by Charles Chaplin (Book Review) ...	...
The Victors (Film Review) ...	48	ROUD, Richard	39
Indian Film, by Erik Barnouw and S. Krishnaswamy (Book Review) ...	55	The Cardinal (Film Review) ...	75
State of the Studios ...	147	A Home Away from Home (In the Picture) ...	96
The Nutty Professor (Film Review) ...	185	Les Vampires (Film Review) ...	122
Festivals '64: Karlovy Vary ...	188	Festivals '64: Cannes ...	136
Conversation with George Cukor ...	...	Rondo Galant: The World of Jacques Demy ...	184
GODARD, Jean-Luc	63	Festivals '64: Berlin ...	...
Ten Questions: Les Carabiniers ...	...	RYU, Chishu	92
HARCOURT, Peter	94	Yasujiro Ozu ...	...
The Leather Boys (Film Review) ...	...	SCHOENBAUM, David	22
HIGHAM, Charles	74	The Threepenny Opera (In the Picture) ...	...
Meeting Mary Astor (In the Picture) ...	...	STEIN, Elliott	88
HOUSTON, Penelope	26	Fog at Knokke ...	...
Whose Crisis? ...	34	STRICK, Joseph	65
Muriel (Film Review) ...	73	Ten Questions: The Balcony ...	...
The British Lion Stakes (In the Picture) ...	78	SUSSEX, Elizabeth	41
The Organisation Man ...	98	David and Lisa (Film Review) ...	94
Charade (Film Review) ...	101	The Lizards (Film Review) ...	98
Thank You for Having Me, by C. A. Lejeune (Book Review) ...	120	Irma La Douce (Film Review) ...	145
Festivals '64: Cannes ...	163	Nine Days of One Year (Film Review) ...	198
Keeping Up with the Antonionis ...	...	Behold a Pale Horse (Film Review) ...	199
HUNNINGS, Neville	74	The Night of the Iguana (Film Review) ...	...
Tribulations of a Censor (In the Picture) ...	...	TAYLOR, John Russell	38
JACOB, Gilles	194	The Servant and The Caretaker (Film Reviews) ...	96
La Peau Douce (Film Review) ...	...	Nothing But the Best (Film Review) ...	101
JARVIE, Ian	22	A Million and One Nights, by Terry Ramsaye (Book Review) ...	143
Hong Kong Notes (In the Picture) ...	...	Le Feu Follet (Film Review) ...	...
KUBRICK, Stanley	63	The Personal Vision of Ingmar Bergman, by Jörn Donner (Book	154
Ten Questions: Dr. Strangelove ...	...	Review) ...	198
KUSTOW, Michael	93	Amélie, ou le Temps d'Aimer (Film Review) ...	...
Le Joli Mai (Film Review) ...	142	VAS, Robert	13
The Silence (Film Review) ...	144	London Festival: Short Films ...	...
Hamlet (Film Review) ...	...	WEINBERG, Gretchen	32
LANE, John Francis	169	Interview with Roman Polanski ...	...
The Moment of Truth (In the Picture) ...	...	WERTMULLER, Lina	64
LOSEY, Joseph	66	Ten Questions: I Basilischi ...	...
Ten Questions: The Servant ...	...	WYNDHAM, Francis	147
		Long Day's Journey into Night (Film Review) ...	198
		The Best Man (Film Review) ...	...
		MISCELLANEOUS	10
		London Festival Chart ...	62
		Ten Questions to Nine Directors ...	29, 90, 140, 204
		Film Clips (Arkadin) ...	...



## INDEX TO FILM TITLES

- A Bout de Souffle, 3, 75, 144, 184  
 Abysses, Les, 3, 52  
 Accattone, 97  
 Accused, The, 186  
 Across the Pacific, 74  
 Actress, The, 192  
 A Double Tour, 47  
 Adventures of Harry Dickson, The, 21, 123  
 Advise and Consent, 40, 198  
 African Queen, The, 152  
 After School, 29  
 Age d'Or, L', 175, 176, 208, 209  
 Aka-Hige, 203  
 All Fall Down, 114, 115  
 All Quiet on the Western Front, 189  
 All the Way Home, 104  
 Alone on the Pacific, 121  
 Amants, Les, 143  
 Ambassador's Daughter, The, 205  
 Amélie, ou le Temps d'Aimer, 198, 212  
 America, America (The Anatolian Smile), 104, 165, 185  
 Amiche, Le, 166, 181  
 Amitiés Particulières, Les, 186  
 Amore Difficile, L', see Sex Can Be Difficult  
 Amour à Vingt Ans, L' (Love at Twenty), 90, 124, 212  
 Anatolian Smile, The, see America, America  
 Année Dernière à Marienbad, L', 29, 34, 36, 46, 89, 107, 168  
 Annonciation, L', 89  
 Ascenseur pour l'Echafaud, 143  
 Ashes, 124  
 Assalto ao Trem Pagador, 170  
 Asu o Tsukuru Hitobito, 109  
 Attack of the Crab Monsters, 179  
 Au Coeur de la Vie, 11, 13, 198  
 Automania 2000, 50  
 Autumn Afternoon, An, 3, 11  
 Avventura, L', 16, 17, 29, 144, 166, 196  
  
 Baby Face, 43  
 Bad Boys, 185  
 Bad Sister, 42  
 Bad Sleep Well, The (Warui Yatsu Hodo Yoku Nemuru), 109, 202  
 Baie des Anges, La, 90, 137, 138, 139  
 Balcony, The, 40, 52, 65  
 Bande à Part, 122, 183, 184  
 Banditi a Orgosolo, 171  
 Banking, 89  
 Barabbas, 173, 210  
 Basilischi, I, see The Lizards  
 Battleship Potemkin, 46, 101  
 Beast with Five Fingers, The, 127, 156  
 Beauty Jungle, The, 158  
 Beauty's Sorrow, The, 92  
 Becket, 158, 212  
 Bedtime Story, 158, 212  
 Beggars of Life, 43  
 Behold a Pale Horse, 198, 212  
 Bel-Ami, 29  
 Bellboy, The, 95  
 Belle Vie, La, 11  
 Bernardine, 206  
 Best Man, The, 165, 185, 198, 212  
 Bête Humaine, La, 176, 178  
 Bible, The, 23, 172, 173  
 Bicycle Thieves, 46  
 Billy Liar, 3, 59, 81, 167  
 Bird Man of Alcatraz, 114  
 Birds, The, 3  
 Birds and the Bees, The, 206  
 Black Fox, 52  
 Blind Date, 56, 58  
 Blossoms in the Dust, 43  
 Bob le Flambeur, 90  
 Boccaccio '70, 30, 48  
 Boom, Il, 23  
 Borderlines, 153  
 Boudou sauvé des Eaux, 131, 176, 177  
 Boule de Suif, 145  
 Breathdeath, 88  
 Breathless, see A Bout de Souffle  
 Brick Kiln, 13  
 Bride Comes to Yellow Sky, The, 152  
 Brig, The, 187  
 Bye Bye Birdie, 52  
  
 Cabin in the Cotton, 43  
 Call Girls of Rome, 29  
 Caltiki, 141, 153  
 Camille, 189, 191  
 Canary Murder Case, The, 43  
 Cangaceiro, O, 170  
 Captain Newman, 104  
 Carabiniers, Les, 3, 11, 12, 13, 21, 33, 41, 50, 59, 63  
 Cardinal, The, 39, 52, 103, 165  
 Caretaker, The, 28, 38, 60, 64, 104  
 Carpetbaggers, The, 212  
 Carry On Jack, 104  
 Cartouche, 181  
 Casablanca, 127  
 Casanova, 23  
 Casque d'Or, 29  
 Castle of Terror, 141  
 Caught, 140  
 Cavo ad Olio Fluido a 220,000 Volt, 79  
  
 Cela s'appelle l'Aurore, 176  
 Cent Mille Dollars au Soleil, 122  
 Ceremony, The, 104  
 Chalk Garden, The, 104  
 Chapman Report, The, 191  
 Charade, 91, 95, 98, 104, 164  
 Charge is Murder, The, 104  
 Charge of the Light Brigade, The, 56  
 Chase, The, 127  
 Cheyenne Autumn, 212  
 Chien Andalou, Un, 178, 208, 209  
 Chienne, La, 176  
 Child is Waiting, A, 153  
 Children of the Damned, 104  
 Christian, The, 101  
 Circus, The, 207  
 Citizen Kane, 6, 7, 164  
 Cléo de 5 à 7, 134  
 Cleopatra, 3, 52, 104, 158, 212  
 Coal Face, 124  
 Collector, The, 124  
 College is a Nice Place, 92  
 Comedy Man, The, 212  
 Commare Secca, La, 122  
 Compagni, I, 23  
 Concentration Camp to Let, 13  
 Concerto Flamenco, 89  
 Condamné à Mort s'est Echappé, Un, 154  
 Condemned of Altona, The, 121  
 Confidential Agent, 156  
 Confidential Report, 9  
 Constant Nymph, The, 156  
 Corruzione, La, 23  
 Counterfeiters, The, 52  
 Courtship of Eddie's Father, The, 165  
 Cousins, Les, 47  
 Crack Up, 127  
 Crime and Punishment, 127  
 Crime de Monsieur Lange, Le, 176  
 Crime no Sacopa, 170  
 Criminal Life of Archibaldo de la Cruz, The, 177, 178  
 Critic, The, 50  
 Cronaca di un Amore, 20, 90  
 Cronaca Familiare, 41, 52  
 Cross of Lorraine, 156  
 Cuba Sil, 21, 93  
 Current, The, 186  
  
 Dagger, The, 74  
 Dames du Bois de Boulogne, Les, 139, 143  
 Dangerous Age, A, 95  
 David and Lisa, 21, 42, 52, 165  
 David Copperfield, 189, 190  
 Day and the Hour, The, 153  
 Day Dream, 187  
 Day of Wrath, 29  
 Days of Wine and Roses, 3, 95  
 Dead Image, 165, 206  
 De Haut en Bas, 127  
 Démon de Onze Heures, Le, 124  
 Demonio, Il, 29, 90  
 Dérive, La, 65  
 Description of a Struggle, 21  
 Deserto Rosso, Il, 23, 119, 187  
 Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol, 169  
 Devi, 195, 212  
 Devil Doll, 42  
 Diable au Corps, Le, 33  
 Diamonds of the Night, 186  
 Diary of a Chambermaid, 164, 176  
 Diary of Anne Frank, The, 31  
 Dinner at Eight, 43  
 Divorce—Italian Style, 3, 23, 121  
 Dr. Strangelove, 3, 37, 52, 56, 61, 63, 69, 70, 104, 120, 165, 198  
 Dodsworth, 74  
 Dolce Vita, La, 21, 29, 86, 173, 208  
 Don Juan, 74  
 Donna Scimmia, La, 172  
 Donzoko, see The Lower Depths  
 Doulos, Le, 90  
 Do You Like Women?, 158, 212  
 Dracula, 179  
 Dragées au Poivre, 13  
 Dream of the Red Chamber, 103, 155  
 Drunken Angel, 109, 110, 111, 202, 203  
 Dubious Patriots, The, 30  
  
 Each Day of Every Week, 186  
 Eater, An, 89  
 Eavesdropper, The, 124  
 Eclipse, The, 3, 17, 29, 47, 119, 166  
 El Greco, 172  
 Empress Wu, 22  
 Enchanted Island, 153  
 Enfants du Paradis, Les, 158  
 Eve, 47  
 Everybody's Nobody, 75  
 Everyday Chronicle, 50  
 Every Night of the Week, 104  
 Exterminating Angel, The, 3, 90, 91, 209  
  
 Face, The, 29  
 Face Behind the Mask, The, 210  
 Fail Safe, 3, 153  
 Fall of the Roman Empire, The, 158, 212  
 Family Diary, see Cronaca Familiare



Fanatic, 206  
 Farewells, 90  
 Fashions of 1934, 43  
 Fear and Desire, 69  
 Female, 43  
 Femme est une Femme, Une, 75, 90, 184  
 Femme Mariée, La, 187  
 Ferry to Hong Kong, 22  
 Feu Follet, Le, 143, 158  
 Fidanzati, I, 3, 11, 13, 63, 78, 80, 94, 104, 155, 164  
 Fièvre Monte à El Pao, La, 176  
 55 Days at Peking, 52  
 Finest Hours, The, 158  
 Flaming Creatures, 89  
 Fly, The, 31  
 Fog Over Frisco, 43  
 4 for Texas, 100  
 491, 74  
 Freaks, 3, 179  
 French Dressing, 158  
 Freud, 100  
 Frisco Jenny, 43  
 From Russia with Love, 3, 27, 28, 31  
 From the Earth to the Moon, 153  
 Frustra e il Corpo, La, 153  
 Fünf von der Jazzband, 127  
 Fun in Acapulco, 52  
 Funny Side of Life, The, 104  
 Futari, 89  
  
 Gala Day, 13  
 Game, The, 50  
 Gardener, The, 74  
 Gare de Lyon, 89  
 Gathering of Eagles, A, 27  
 Gay Purree, 153  
 Generation, A, 32  
 Gentleman Steals, The, 103  
 Girl from Tenth Avenue, The, 42  
 Girl of the Road, 13  
 Girl with Green Eyes, 146, 158  
 Giulietta degli Spiriti, 172  
 Global Affair, A, 158  
 Godelureaux, Les, 90  
 Golden Arrow, The, 42  
 Goldfinger, 56, 128, 212  
 Gold Rush, The, 207  
 Goldstein, 166  
 Gone with the Wind, 189, 191  
 Gospel According to St. Matthew, The, *see* Il Vangelo Secondo Matteo  
 Grass is Greener, The, 91  
 Great Lie, The, 74  
 Grido, Il, 18, 20, 79  
 Gunnar Hedes Saga, 187  
 Guns at Batasi, 212  
 Guns in the Afternoon, 89  
 Gypsy, 100  
  
 Hakuchi, *see* The Idiot  
 Hallelujah the Hills, 166  
 Hamlet, 75, 144, 185  
 Hamp, *see* King and Country  
 Hands of Orlac, The, 126, 127  
 Hard Day's Night, A, 167, 196, 206, 212  
 Haunting, The, 52, 56  
 Heavens Above, 27  
 Heller in Pink Tights, 192, 205  
 Herencia, La, 122  
 Herr Arne's Treasure, 187  
 Hidden Fortress, The (Kakushi Toride no San-Akunin), 109, 201, 202  
 Hide and Seek, 27  
 High and Low, 111  
 High Noon, 185  
 Himmelskibet, 187  
 Hiroshima mon Amour, 29, 34  
 Homme de Rio, L', 170  
 Honest Man, An, 75  
 Hop Pickers, The, 185, 186  
 Horror, 153  
 Hôtel des Invalides, 177  
 Hot Enough for June, 104  
 Hound Dog Man, 181  
 How the West Was Won, 52, 104, 158  
 How to be Loved, 11  
 Hud, 3, 164, 165  
 Huis Clos, 29  
 Hurricane, 74  
 Hush . . . Hush, Sweet Charlotte, 124, 165  
  
 Ichiban Utsukushiku, 109  
 I Could Go On Singing, 3  
 Idiot, The (Hakuchi), 109, 112  
 Ieri, Oggi, Domani (Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow), 23, 172, 212  
 I Flunked, But . . . 92  
 Ikimono no Kiroku, *see* I Live in Fear  
 Ikiru, 109, 111, 113, 203  
 I Live in Fear (Ikimono no Kiroku), 109, 112, 200  
 Imperial Women, The, 22  
 Incredible Journey, The, 104  
 Indifferenti, Gli, 23  
 Inheritance, 75  
 Innocent Sorcerers, 124  
 Innocents, The, 60  
 In the French Style, 3  
 Irma la Douce, 98, 104, 212  
 Iron Horse, The, 179  
 Island of Dr. Moreau, The, 181

It Happened Last Night, 74  
 It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World, 50, 52, 103, 104, 205  
 It Started In Tokyo, 100  
 Ivan's Childhood, 102  
  
 Jade Hairpin, The, 103, 155  
 Jane Eyre, 141  
 Je m'balade dans Moscou, 121  
 Jette, La, 13, 21  
 Joli Mai, Le, 21, 93, 104  
 Joseph Kilian, 122, 186  
 Journal d'un Curé de Campagne, Le, 143  
 Journal d'une Femme de Chambre, Le, 77, 175, 186  
 Journey into Fear, 7  
 Judex, 24  
 Jules et Jim, 21, 29, 48, 168, 194, 209  
 Just Like a Woman, 43  
 Juvenile Passion, 29  
  
 Kakushi Toride no San-Akunin, *see* The Hidden Fortress  
 Kapo, 171  
 Killer's Kiss, 69, 71  
 Killing, The, 69, 72  
 King and Country (*former title*: Hamp), 124, 210, 212  
 King in New York, A, 207  
 Kinsey Report, The, 102  
 Kiss, The, 42  
 Kissin' Cousins, 158  
 Knife in the Water, 3, 32  
 Knights of the Teutonic Order, 52, 102, 124  
 Kumonosujo, *see* Throne of Blood  
  
 Labyrinth, 50  
 Ladies Who Do, 27  
 Lady from Shanghai, The, 7  
 Landru, 90  
 Lawrence of Arabia, 3, 23, 52, 59, 104, 158  
 Leather Boys, The, 27, 52, 94  
 Lemonade Joe, 185  
 Leopard, The, 3, 36, 52, 99, 173  
 Letter from Siberia, 21, 46  
 Lilith, 170  
 Lilly Turner, 43  
 Little Shop of Horrors, The, 31  
 Little Women, 189, 190  
 Living and the Dead, The, 185  
 Lizards, The (1 Basilisch), 13, 50, 60, 64, 94, 104, 155, 158  
 Lola, 135, 137, 138, 139, 166  
 Lolita, 37, 69, 72  
 Lonely Man, The, 75  
 Long Day's Journey into Night, 90, 147, 158  
 Long Ships, The, 104  
 Look Back in Anger, 55  
 Lord Jim, 22, 56, 140  
 Lord of the Flies, 194, 212  
 Lotna, 90  
 Loutre, La, 187  
 Love at Twenty, *see* L'Amour à Vingt Ans  
 Loved One, The, 124  
 Love 'Em and Leave 'Em, 43  
 Love With the Proper Stranger, 196, 212  
 Lower Depths, The (Donzoko), 201, 202  
 L-Shaped Room, The, 27  
 Luggage of Mr. O. F., The, 127  
 Lunch Hour, 27  
 Lust for Life, 152  
  
 M, 126, 127, 156  
 Macbeth, 8  
 Madame White Snake, 22, 103, 155  
 Magliari, I, 169  
 Magnificent Ambersons, The, 6, 7  
 Magnificent Showman, The, 172, 212  
 Mahanagar, 185  
 Maltese Falcon, The, 43, 74, 126  
 Mamma Roma, 97  
 Manchurian Candidate, The, 114, 115, 198  
 Man in the Middle, 158  
 Mani sulla Città, Le, 23, 30, 169  
 Man's Favourite Sport?, 158, 165  
 Man's Hope, 150  
 Manuscript Found at Saragossa, The, 124  
 Man Who Knew Too Much, The, 127  
 Man with the X-Ray Eyes, The, 179  
 Mare, Il, 104, 123, 134  
 Mark of the Vampire, 42  
 Marnie, 164, 165, 199  
 Marty, 21  
 Mary, Mary, 104  
 Masque of the Red Death, The, 30, 56, 58, 179, 180  
 Massacro al Grande Canyon, 172  
 Matrimonio all'Italiana, 172  
 Meddling Woman, 42  
 Méditerranée, 89  
 Meet Me in St. Louis, 150  
 Méspris, Le, 75, 100, 164, 184  
 Metempsyco, 153  
 Mickey One, 124  
 Midnight Lace, 205  
 Midsummer Night's Dream, A (Reinhardt), 29  
 Midsummer Night's Dream, A (Trnka), 90  
 Mind Benders, The, 3  
 Mr. Sardonicus, 153  
 Moby Dick, 6, 210  
 Moderato Cantabile, 134  
 Moment of Truth, The, 169, 172



Mondo Cane, 3, 29  
 Monemvasia, 187  
 Monsieur Verdoux, 150  
 Monte Carlo Madness, 127  
 Moon-Spinners, The, 205  
 Mort en ce Jardin, La, 176  
 Mother Joan of the Angels, 124  
 Moulin Rouge, 152  
 Move over, Darling, 95  
 Moving Finger, The, 158  
 Murder at the Vanities, 43  
 Muriel, 3, 11, 21, 34, 52, 89, 104, 123, 133, 135, 164, 168, 194  
 Mutiny on the Bounty, 3, 100  
 My Fair Lady, 192  
 Mysteries of Paris, 102  
 Mysterious X, The, 187

Naked Among Wolves, 212  
 Navigator, The, 150  
 Nazarin, 3, 90, 176, 177  
 Never Put It in Writing, 158  
 Night Must Fall, 60, 144, 158, 167  
 Night Nurse, 43  
 Night of the Hunter, The, 152  
 Night of the Iguana, The, 199, 212  
 Nina de Luto, La, 121  
 Nine Days of One Year, 145  
 Noia, La, 23  
 Nora Inu, see Stray Dog  
 North By Northwest, 98  
 Nothing But a Man, 187  
 Nothing But the Best, 60, 65, 96, 104  
 Notorious, 204  
 Notorious Landlady, The, 100  
 Notte, La, 17, 18, 20, 47, 166, 168, 184, 208  
 Nuovi Angeli, I, 97  
 Nutty Professor, The, 52, 89, 95, 147, 153, 165

Of Human Bondage, 212  
 Old Dark House, The, 153  
 Olvidados, Los, 178  
 Onan, 89  
 One-Eyed Jacks, 69, 141  
 One Hour With You, 189  
 One Potato, Two Potatoes, 121, 165  
 Only Son, The, 92  
 On the Beach, 201  
 Orfeu Negro, 29, 170  
 Ossessione, 131, 132  
 O.S.S. 117, 102  
 Othello, 5, 8  
 Ouranos, 11  
 Our Man in Havana, 60  
 Outsider, The, 100

Paisa, 29  
 Palm Beach Story, The, 74  
 Pandora and the Flying Dutchman, 141  
 Parallelstrasse, 88, 122  
 Paramount on Parade, 43  
 Parapluies de Cherbourg, Les, 120, 136, 137, 139, 166, 212  
 Paris Nous Appartient, 21  
 Paris When It Sizzles, 158, 165  
 Partie de Campagne, Une, 131  
 Passenger, 11, 12, 13, 124, 158, 187  
 Pather Panchali, 196  
 Paths of Glory, 37, 69, 70, 210  
 Peach Thief, The, 186  
 Peau Douce, La, 120, 194, 212  
 Pensionato, Il, 79  
 Petit Soldat, Le, 3, 90  
 Phantom Lovers, 212  
 Pharaoh, 124  
 Philadelphia Story, The, 192  
 Pink Panther, The, 95  
 Place to Go, A, 27  
 Playboy of the Western World, 153  
 Plus Belles Escroqueries du Monde, Les, 75  
 Point of Order, 122  
 Portrait in Black, 205  
 Posto, Il, 21, 78, 79  
 Pressure Point, 153  
 Prima della Rivoluzione, 122  
 Prize, The, 95, 98, 165  
 Proie pour l'Ombre, La, 166, 181  
 Promise, The, 170  
 Psycho, 181  
 Pumpkin Eater, The, 60, 73, 121, 167, 197, 212

Quatre Cents Coups, Les, 194

Raggare, 74  
 Rashomon, 109, 110, 111  
 Rattle of a Simple Man, 212  
 Raven, The, 31, 179  
 Rear Window, 47  
 Red Stain, The, 50  
 Règle du Jeu, La, 177, 178  
 Reluctant Saint, The, 153  
 Renaissance, 75  
 Repas du Guerrier, Le, 29  
 Rich Are Always With Us, The, 42  
 River of Romance, 188  
 Road to Hong Kong, The, 206  
 Robin and the 7 Hoods, 158, 212  
 Robinson Crusoe, 177  
 Rocco and his Brothers, 79

Rogopag, 13, 90  
 Roma, Città Aperta, 131, 132, 134  
 Rome in Flames, 141  
 Romeo and Juliet, 189, 190  
 Roof Garden, The, 13  
 Room at the Top, 55, 167  
 Rope, 134  
 Rope of Sand, 156  
 Running Man, The, 60

Salaire de la Peur, Le, 29  
 Salvatore Giuliano, 3, 30, 169  
 Sand Pebbles, The, 22  
 Satan Met a Lady, 43  
 Saturday Night and Sunday Morning, 56, 60, 81, 144  
 Saturday Night Kid, The, 43  
 Savage Eye, The, 40  
 Sawdust and Tinsel, 29  
 Scorpio Rising, 89  
 Seance on a Wet Afternoon, 146, 158  
 Secret Agent, 126  
 Secrets of the Nazi Criminals, 74  
 Sedotta e Abbandonata, 23, 121  
 Selva Tragica, 170  
 Senso, 131, 132  
 September 5 at St. Henri, 13  
 Servant, The, 3, 38, 47, 52, 56, 59, 66, 154  
 Seven Days in May, 114, 117, 158, 164, 165, 169, 198  
 Seven Samurai (Shichinin no Samurai), 109, 111, 200, 201  
 7th Dawn, The, 212  
 Seventh Seal, The, 180  
 Sex Can Be Difficult (L'Amore Difficile), 95, 97, 104  
 She and He, 184  
 Shichinin no Samurai, see Seven Samurai  
 Shizuka Naru Ketto, 111  
 Shock Corridor, 153  
 Shock Treatment, 153  
 Shot in the Dark, A, 3, 56  
 Showman, 75  
 Show of Shows, 43  
 Shubun, 111  
 Siberian Lady Macbeth, A, 124  
 Sign of the Gladiator, 141  
 Signora senza Camellie, La, 90  
 Silence, The, 29, 74, 142, 158, 186  
 Sins of Youth, The, 29  
 Si Versailles m'était conté, 29  
 633 Squadron, 158  
 Sleep, 89, 134  
 Sleeping Tiger, The, 59  
 Smiles of a Summer Night, 29, 209  
 Smog, 181  
 Snobs, 29  
 So Big, 43  
 Social Celebrity, A, 43  
 So Close to Life, 29  
 Sorpasso, Il, 23  
 Soupriant, Le, 95, 104  
 Southerner, The, 178  
 Sparrows Can't Sing, 3  
 Spartacus, 69, 70  
 Spectre, The, 141  
 Spellbound, 204, 205  
 Spring Reunion, 206  
 Spring's Awakening, 127  
 Stage Door, 43  
 Star is Born, A, 188, 191, 192  
 State Fair, 206  
 Stitch in Time, A, 52  
 Stolen Hours, 104  
 Story of G.I. Joe, The, 150  
 Story of the Count of Monte Cristo, The, 100  
 Straitjacket, 153, 212  
 Stranger, The (Roger Corman), 30, 52, 66, 102, 179, 180  
 Stranger, The (Orson Welles), 7  
 Stranger on the Third Floor, 127, 210  
 Stray Dog (Nora Inu), 111, 202, 203  
 Stud Lonigan, 100  
 Subarshiki Nichiyobi, 110  
 Successo, Il, 23  
 Sugata Sanshiro, 109, 110  
 Sugata Sanshiro Zoku, 109  
 Summer Holiday, 3  
 Sunday in September, A, 13, 74  
 Sunrise at Campobello, 198  
 Sun Shines Bright, The, 152  
 Surprise Package, 91  
 Susan Slade, 100  
 Susan Starr, 89  
 System, The, 212

Take Her, She's Mine, 52  
 Take off your Clothes and Live, 3  
 Taming of the Shrew, The, 191  
 Teenage Caveman, 179  
 Tempest, 141  
 Tengoku to Jigoku, 203  
 Terror, The, 31, 59, 102, 179  
 Terror of Dr. Hichcock, The (L'Orribile Segreto del Dottor Hichcock), 141  
 Thanks a Lot, 89  
 These Glamour Girls, 43  
 This Sporting Life, 3, 21  
 Thomas Graal's Best Child, 187  
 Thomas Graal's Best Film, 187  
 Those Who Flee Tomorrow, 109  
 Three Lives of Thomasina, The, 158  
 Threepenny Opera, The, 22



Three Strangers, 156  
 Thrill of It All, The, 52  
 Throne of Blood, 201  
 Time out of War, A, 13  
 Time Stood Still, 3, 78, 79  
 Tiranno di Siracusa, Il, 181  
 Tirez sur le Pianiste, 194  
 Tokyo Story, 90  
 To Love, 187  
 Tom Jones, 3, 21, 27, 28, 153, 167  
 Tom Thumb, 206  
 Tora no O Fumu Otokotachi, 109  
 To the End of the Silver Mountains, 110  
 Touch of Evil, 9  
 Towers Open Fire, 89  
 Toys in the Attic, 52  
 Trial, The, 5, 52  
 Tsubaki Sanjuro, 203  
 27 minutes, 45 seconds, 89  
 Twice a Man, 88  
 Two Are Guilty, 158  
 Two Daughters, 3  
 Two Left Feet, 27  
 Two Living, One Dead, 153  
 Two Men and a Wardrobe, 33  
 Two Women, 29  
 Ugetsu Monogatari, 112  
 Ugly American, The, 3, 27  
 Uma, 109  
 Uncle, The, 124  
 Unearthly Stranger, 181  
 Unsinkable Molly Brown, The, 197  
 Uomo dai Cinque Pallone, 172  
 Vampires, Les, 3, 96  
 Vampiri, I, 141  
 Vampyr, 181  
 Vangelo Secondo Matteo, Il (The Gospel According to St. Matthew), 23, 172, 187  
 Vem Dömer?, 187  
 Venezia, Città Moderna, 79  
 Verlorene, Der, 125, 126  
 Viaccia, La, 90  
 Victors, The, 40, 52, 56  
 Vie à l'Envers, La, 122, 187  
 Vie Privée, 29, 143  
 Viking Women and the Sea Serpent, 179  
 Virgin Spring, The, 29, 74  
 Viridiana, 29, 107, 175, 176, 178  
 Visit, The, 121  
 Vitelloni, I, 94  
 Vivre sa Vie, 107, 144, 184  
 Voyage in Italy, 131, 132  
 Waga Seishun ni Koinashi, 110  
 Walk, The, 13  
 War Game, The, 13  
 War Games, 89  
 Warui Yatsu Hodo Yoku Nemuru, *see* The Bad Sleep Well  
 We Were Strangers, 150  
 What a Crazy World, 52  
 What a Way to Go, 158  
 What Did the Lady Forget?, 92  
 What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?, 3, 124  
 Wheelchair, The, 104  
 Wheel of Fire, 212  
 Who's Been Sleeping in My Bed?, 95  
 Who's Minding the Store?, 95  
 Wild Strawberries, 29, 209  
 Witch and Warlock, 73  
 Witchcraft Through the Ages, 187  
 Wolf Trap, The, 102  
 Woman of the Dunes, 120  
 Women, The, 192  
 Women of the World, 29, 52  
 Wonderful Life, 206  
 Wonderful World of the Brothers Grimm, The, 52  
 World of Henry Orient, The, 158, 166  
 World of Suzie Wong, The, 22  
 Yang Kwei Fei, 22  
 Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow, *see* Ieri, Oggi, Domani  
 Yoidore Tenshi, *see* Drunken Angel  
 Yojimbo, 112, 203  
 Young Savages, The, 114, 115  
 Young Stranger, The, 114, 115  
 Zazie dans le Métro, 29, 143  
 Zéro de Conduite, 101, 181  
 Zulu, 104

## INDEX TO ILLUSTRATIONS

(Film Titles and Personalities)

A Cause, A Cause d'une Femme, 91  
 Actress, The, 190  
 African Queen, The, 149  
 Aldrich, Robert, 21, 165  
 All Fall Down, 115  
 All the Way Home, 148  
 Alone on the Pacific, 121  
 Amore in Città, 132

Année Dernière à Marienbad, L', 106  
 Antonioni, Michelangelo, 118  
 Avventura, L', 16, 17, 18

Baie des Anges, La, 46, 136, 138  
 Balcony, The, 41  
 Bancroft, Anne, 60  
 Bande à Part, 182, 183  
 Beatty, Warren, 170  
 Best Man, The, 198  
 Bible, The, 171  
 Boccaccio '70, 30, 45  
 Buñuel, Luis, 76

Camille, 190  
 Carabiniers, Les, 11  
 Cardinal, The, 39  
 Caretaker, The, 38, 64  
 Cervi, Antonio, 118  
 Charade, 22  
 Clayton, Jack, 60  
 Connery, Sean, 73  
 Corman, Roger, 56  
 Cotten, Joseph, 165  
 Crawford, Joan, 165  
 Crime and Punishment, 126  
 Cukor, George, 188

Dames du Bois de Boulogne, Les, 139  
 David Copperfield, 189  
 Davis, Bette, 165  
 Delsol, Paule, 65  
 Demonio, Il, 29  
 Deserto Rosso, Il, 54, 118, 166  
 Diary of a Chambermaid, 174, 176, 177  
 Diary of a Madman, 31  
 Dr. Strangelove, 37  
 Doulos, Le, 90  
 Drunken Angel, 110  
 Eclipse, The, 15, 19  
 8½, 82, 85

Face to Face, 152  
 Fellini, Federico, 83, 84, 86, 87  
 Feu Follet, Le, 143  
 Fidanzati, I, 79, 80  
 From Russia with Love, 28

Godard, Jean-Luc, 75  
 Goldfinger, 128, 129

Hamlet, 145  
 Hard Day's Night, A, 167  
 Harris, Richard, 173  
 Heaven and Hell, 203  
 Hedren, Tippi, 73  
 Heller in Pink Tights, 191  
 Hiquill, Philippe, 75  
 Hitchcock, Alfred, 73  
 Huston, John, 172, 173

Idiot, The, 112  
 Ikiru, 113  
 I Live in Fear, 201  
 Irma La Douce, 98

Jetée, La, 13  
 Joli Mai, Le, 93  
 Journal d'une Femme de Chambre, Le, 77, 174, 177, 178  
 Judex, 24, 25

Kubrick, Stanley, 63, 68  
 Kurosawa, Akira, 108

Lady from Shanghai, The, 6  
 Leather Boys, The, 27  
 Lemonade Joe, 185  
 Lizards, The, 94  
 Lola, 130, 137, 139  
 Lolita, 71  
 Lord Jim, 140  
 Lord of the Flies, 195  
 Lorre, Peter, 125  
 Losey, Joseph, 67  
 Lower Depths, The, 202  
 Love with the Proper Stranger, 196

Magnificent Ambersons, The, 8  
 Manchurian Candidate, The, 114  
 Mare, Il, 48, 135  
 Martin, Dean, 21  
 Mask of Dimitrios, The, 127  
 Mason, James, 60  
 Masque of the Red Death, The, 56, 61, 180  
 Maysles, Albert, 75  
 Milo, Sandra, 86  
 Modern Times, 207  
 Moment of Truth, The, 160  
 Moon-Spinners, The, 206  
 Muriel, 34, 35, 133  
 My Fair Lady, 193

Night of the Hunter, The, 150, 151  
 Night of the Iguana, The, 199  
 Night Must Fall, 59  
 Nine Days of One Year, 146



Nothing but the Best, 58  
Notorious, 204

*Olmi, Ermanno*, 63  
Orribile Segreto del Dottor Hichcock, L', 181  
*Ozu, Yasujiro*, 92

Parallelstrasse, 122  
Parapluies de Cherbourg, Les, 138, 139  
Paris when it Sizzles, 124  
Passenger, 12  
Peau Douce, La, 74, 121, 194  
Pink Panther, The, 2  
Plus Belles Escroqueries du Monde, Les, 32  
*Polanski, Roman*, 32, 33  
Posto, Il, 78  
Prima della Rivoluzione, 120  
Pumpkin Eater, The, 23, 163, 168

Rashomon, 112  
Red Desert, The, *see* Il Deserto Rosso  
Règle du Jeu, La, 135  
Rifles, The, 169  
*Rossen, Robert*, 170

Sanjuro, 203  
Satan Met a Lady, 42  
Seance on a Wet Afternoon, 147  
*Seberg, Jean*, 170  
Servant, The, 47  
Seven Days in May, 116  
Seven Samurai, 200

Sex can be Difficult, 97  
*Sheamus, Johanne*, 75  
She and He, 184  
Shot in the Dark, A, 57  
Show of Shows, 43  
Silence, The, 142  
Soupirant, Le, 95  
Spartacus, 70  
Spectre, The, 141  
Speed, 88  
State Fair, 205

Throne of Blood, 201  
Time Stood Still, 81  
Tomb of Ligeia, The, 179  
Tora no O, 108  
Touch of Evil, 7  
Trial, The, 4, 7

*Umecka, Jolanta*, 33  
Unchastened Woman, The, 44  
Unsinkable Molly Brown, The, 197

Vampires, Les, 96  
Vangelo Secondo Matteo, Il, 187  
Vie à l'Envers, La, 186  
Viridiana, 106  
Visit, The, 75  
Vivre sa Vie, 106

Wee Willie Winkie, 46  
*Wertmüller, Lina*, 64







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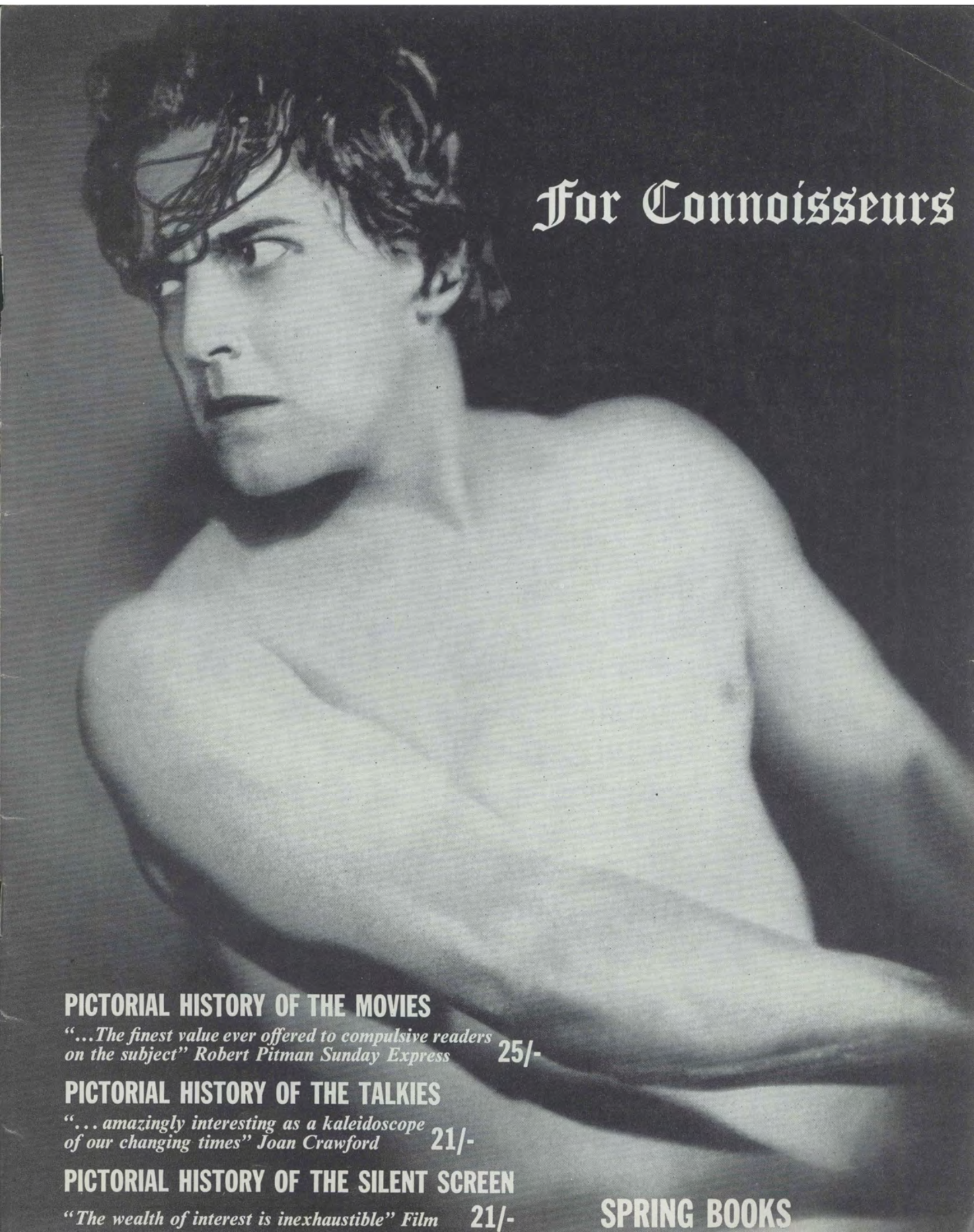
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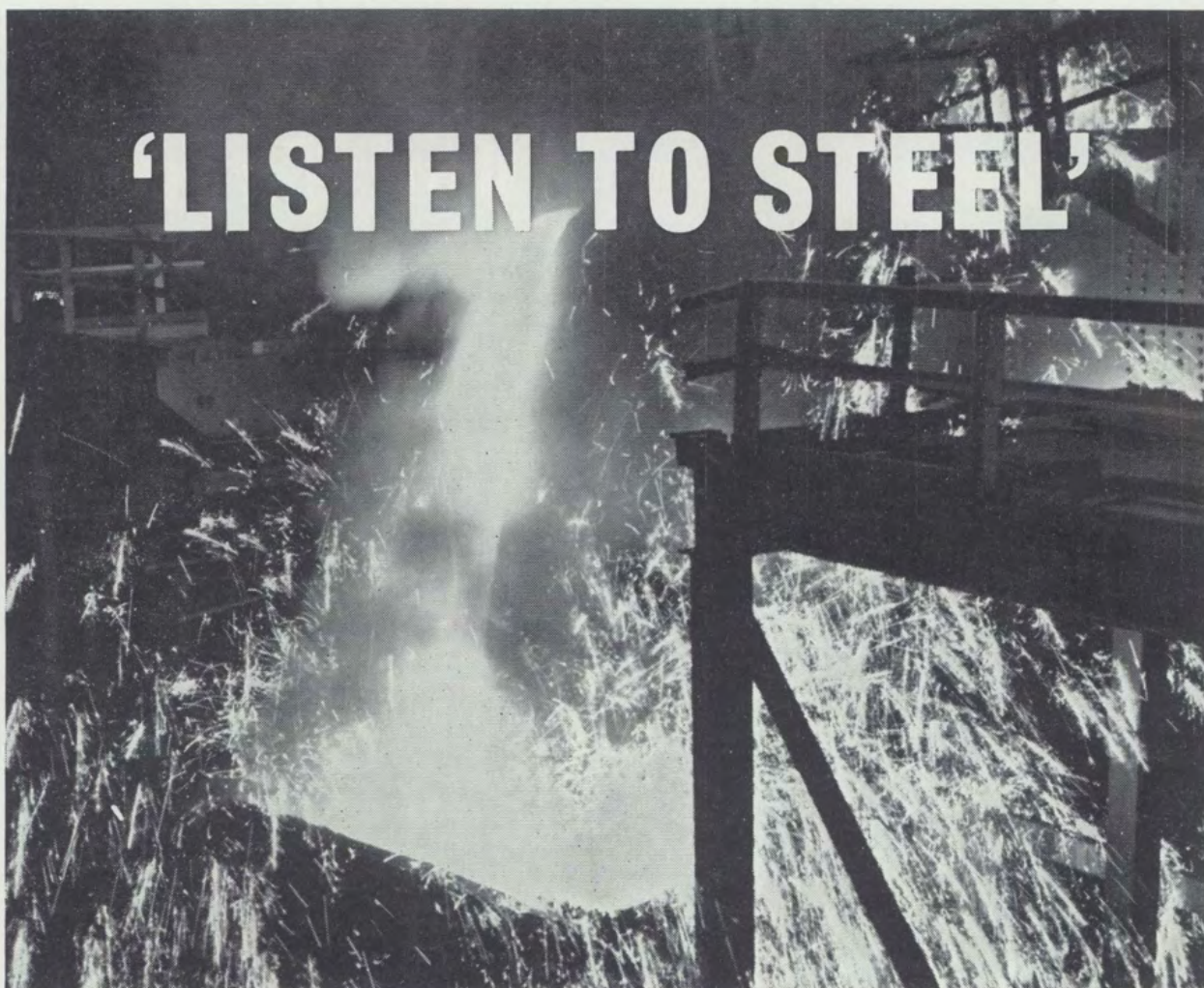
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### CONTENTS

### WINTER

1963-64

VOLUME 33 NO. 1

#### FEATURES

- 3 The Front Page
- 10 London Festival:  
TOM MILNE, ROBERT VAS
- 21 In the Picture
- 24 Franju's *Judex*
- 29 Film Clips: ARKADIN
- 49 Correspondence
- 52 Current Film Guide

#### ARTICLES

- 4 Trials: WILLIAM S. PECHTER
- 14 The Event and the Image:  
MICHELANGELO ANTONIONI
- 15 Shape Around a Black Point:  
GEOFFREY NOWELL-SMITH
- 26 Whose Crisis?: PENELOPE HOUSTON
- 32 Interview with Roman Polanski:  
GRETCHEN WEINBERG
- 42 Off-Broadway Cinema:  
PETER DE ROME
- 44 The Day of the Butterfly:  
ERIC RHODE

#### FILM REVIEWS

- 34 Muriel: PENELOPE HOUSTON
- 36 The Leopard: DAVID ROBINSON
- 37 Dr. Strangelove: TOM MILNE
- 38 The Servant and The Caretaker:  
JOHN RUSSELL TAYLOR
- 39 The Cardinal: RICHARD ROUD
- 40 The Balcony: TOM MILNE
- 40 The Victors: JOHN GILLET
- 41 David and Lisa: ELIZABETH SUSSEX
- 41 Cronaca Familiare: BRENDA DAVIES

#### BOOK REVIEWS

- 48 Indian Film: JOHN GILLET
- 48 Movement in Two Dimensions  
and Le Boulevard du Cinéma:  
DAVID ROBINSON
- 49 International Film Guide 1964:  
BRENDA DAVIES

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ON THE COVER: Catherine Deneuve in Jacques Demy's  
*Les Parapluies de Cherbourg*.

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# THE FRONT PAGE / 1963

**J**ANUARY—Beginning of the year sees strike action threatened (but not materialising) in France, where producers want to bring home to their government the seriousness of their industry's situation. In England, Selwyn Lloyd becomes a Rank Organisation director, the trade press commenting that "a point of popular appeal in the appointment is Mr. Lloyd's confessed love of ten-pin bowling." Massed fans outside the Warner prevent Cliff Richard attending the première of *Summer Holiday*, and he is photographed staring sadly at a television set. Films of the month: *Knife in the Water* and *The Eclipse*, the latter scoring such a success that even mass circulation dailies set reporters on the trail of Monica Vitti. From America, news of the deaths of actors Dick Powell and Jack Carson, director John Farrow and cameraman Franz Planer, stalwarts of a vanishing Hollywood.

**FEBRUARY**—British film month, with Lindsay Anderson's *This Sporting Life* and Joan Littlewood's *Sparrows Can't Sing* firmly established in Leicester Square. Also present: *The Mina Benders*, with Dirk Bogarde and Mary Ure keeping the straightest of straight faces through the year's most over-excited childbirth scene. Warners proudly announce a £60,000 budget for publicising *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?* and begin sprinkling cryptic puns ("She gruesome") around London. Stanley Kubrick, at work on *Dr. Strangelove*, announces action for plagiarism against those associated with *Fail Safe*, another novel about the Bomb also scheduled for filming. Denouement later in the year, when Columbia acquires the *Fail Safe* film, for screening at a discreet but unstated interval after *Strangelove*. BBC's enterprising International Film Season scoops the specialised cinemas when it puts on Olmi's masterly *Time Stood Still*.

**MARCH**—Princess Margaret stays away from Paris première of *Lawrence of Arabia*, but in spite of the Common Market breakdown Sam Spiegel soldiers on, in an effort "to make this première a demonstration of long-term Anglo-French amity." Knock-out performance by Judy Garland fails to save *I Could Go On Singing*, which goes down fighting at the box-office. Puritanical Zurich, catching up with the times, brings the minimum age for admission to cinemas down from 18 to 16.

**APRIL**—Writing off the loss on *Mutiny on the Bounty*, M-G-M report a deficit of 8 million dollars on six months' operations: *Mutiny* did not do badly; it simply cost too much. In London *Mondo Cane* and *Take Off Your Clothes and Live* look as firmly established as the blockbusters. Ray's *Two Daughters* and Rosi's *Salvatore Giuliano* put up a rather worthier challenge. Highest salary ever paid to a TV star announced for Elizabeth Taylor's film about London: she has, it's reported, "quite a number of interesting ideas on how to present London in a new way." *Lawrence of Arabia* collects ten Oscars.

**MAY**—Cannes Festival opens with a squabble, with French producers calling *Les Abysses* an unworthy selection, over Sartre's plaudits. Top prize in any case goes to Visconti's *The Leopard*, with Richard Harris taking the acting award for *This Sporting Life*. Announcement from Hollywood that M-G-M, Fox and Columbia plan to get together to build a super-studio, a project of which no more has been heard by the end of the year. Critics unite to rediscover Patricia Neal, brilliant in Martin Ritt's *Hud*; rediscovery hardly called for with Crawford and Davis, rampaging profitably through *Baby Jane*. Police information for location-shooters in London: "Actors dressed as policemen or vehicles bearing police signs must not be filmed in the presence of the general public."

**JUNE**—Curiosity month for the American cinema, with Jack Lemmon and Lee Remick as tortured alcoholics in *Days of*

*Wine and Roses*, Marlon Brando sporting a silk hat and moustache in *The Ugly American*. Tony Richardson's *Tom Jones* and Geremi's *Divorce—Italian Style* dig in for long runs, with Edith Evans and Marcello Mastroianni in brilliant form. Tod Browning's *Freaks* finds a home after thirty years; and Godard's *Le Petit Soldat* clears a censorship ban after three. Death of Zasu Pitts, whose career went back to *Greedy*, and of Pedro Armendariz.

**JULY**—National Film Finance Corporation announces £200,000 loss on its year's operation, after two years of small profits. Fox breaks a record, with two films bringing three million dollars into the box-office in six days. One is *Cleopatra*, which opens in London in the absence of its stars, and takes a beating from the press. In Moscow, Fellini's *8½* wins the top prize, despite charges of "pessimism" and worse from old-guard Soviet directors. NFT audience makes the rediscovery of the year, with a 7-hour session of Feuillade's *Les Vampires*.

**AUGUST**—Garbo walks away with the headlines, and the box-office, when M-G-M cannily mounts a full-dress revival: the actress of this and any other year. Rank wires a poster for sound to greet *The Birds*, but has to desist when spoilsports complain of the electronic chirrupings. Buñuel's *Nazarin* joins the Academy's late-night programmes (but why has no one yet shown *Exterminating Angel?*), and London enjoys *8½*. In a month of strong international challenge, Britain keeps her end up with *Billy Liar!*, and discovers Julie Christie.

**SEPTEMBER**—First rumblings of autumn crisis in the industry air, when production is briefly halted at Shepperton during a union dispute. Rank Organisation declares a record trading year, but with 51 per cent of the profits (as against last year's 34 per cent) coming from non-cinema activities. In Europe, a Common Market report shows audiences heavily down in all EEC countries, with the exception of a still buoyant Italy. New York successfully launches its first festival, with BFI participation and on the London model. Critics, who seem to have spent a large part of the year rediscovering actresses, greet Jean Seberg's clever performance in *In the French Style* as though they'd never heard of *A Bout de Souffle*.

**OCTOBER**—*From Russia with Love* gives the impression of being on at all the cinemas at once, making James Bond everyone's hero. Brigitte Bardot comes to London on location but has to go home again when crowds stop shooting; Pola Negri, here for a Disney film, meets the press under guard from a cheetah. Death of Adolphe Menjou and of Jean Cocteau, Orpheus of the French cinema.

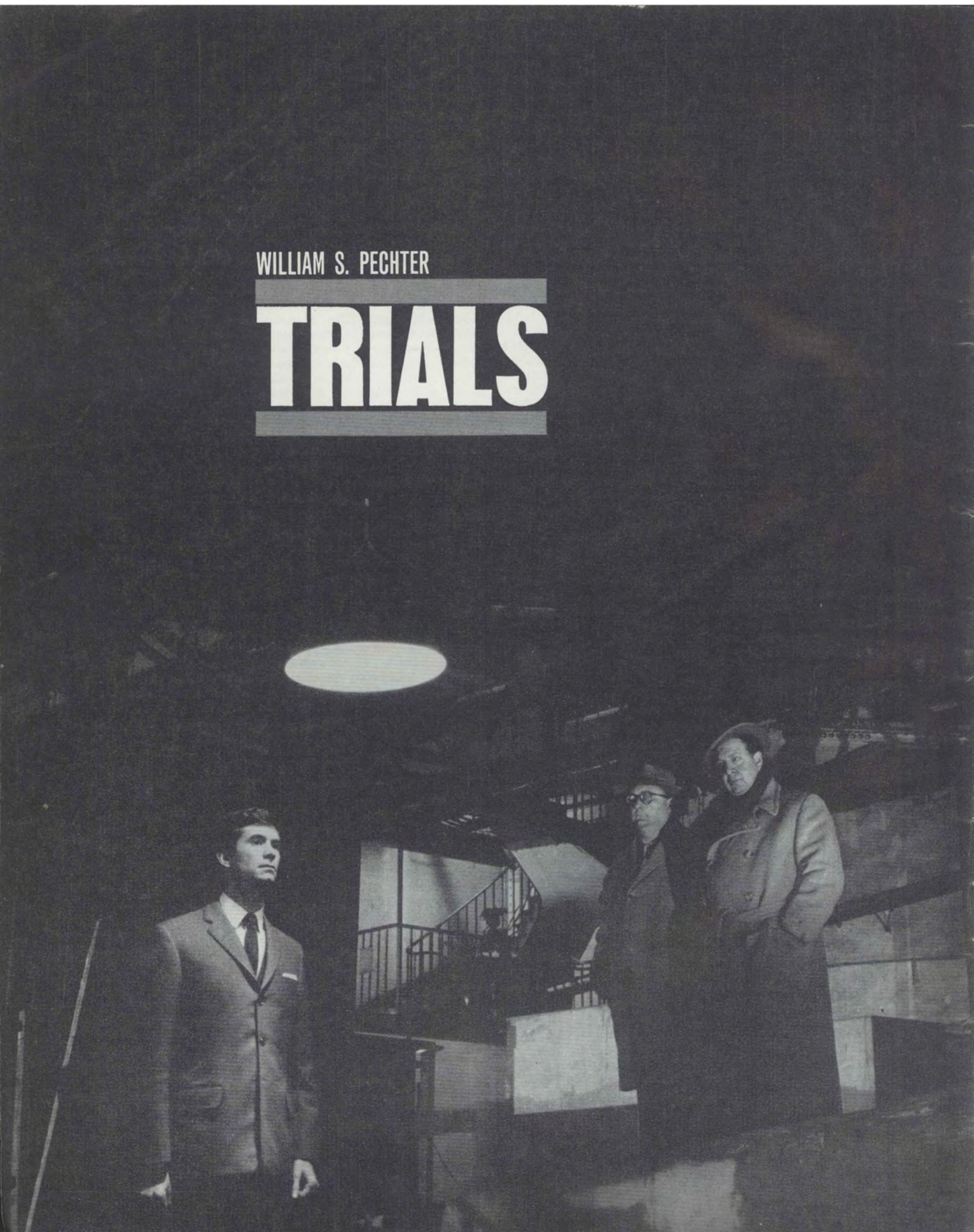
**NOVEMBER**—Film industry crisis spreads, with letters in *The Times*, discussions everywhere, and the independents and the circuits issuing challenges and counter-challenges. Elke Sommer replaces Romy Schneider, who replaced Sophia Loren, in the Sellers comedy *A Shot in the Dark*, and someone offers Grace Kelly a million dollars to make a film. Losey's *The Servant* picks up some dazzling notices, with everyone united in enthusiasm for Dirk Bogarde. As we go to press Visconti's *The Leopard* opens in the version denounced (a trifle unfairly?) by Visconti himself, who wants to see "heads rolling" in the film industry. Columbia announces the postponement of *Dr. Strangelove*. President Kennedy's assassination makes a tough film suddenly look too tough; and we now know that the unthinkable can happen.

**FILMS OF THE YEAR:** *Knife in the Water*, *The Eclipse*, *This Sporting Life*, *Two Daughters*, *Salvatore Giuliano*, *Le Petit Soldat*, *Nazarin*, *8½*, *The Servant*, *The Leopard*. And from the London Festival: *An Autumn Afternoon*, *Les Carabiniers*, *I Fidanzati*, *Muriel*.



WILLIAM S. PECHTER

# TRIALS





ADMITTEDLY, I WENT TO *The Trial* burdened with prejudice. I expected it to be bad, and my expectation seemed to me perfectly reasonable: Welles hasn't given us a film not scandalously bad in over a decade, and, even then, what we were given for years previously was not exactly good. Still, while I expected *The Trial* to be bad, I went to it truly hoping for the best. And, in fact, while I expected it to be bad, bad as a mannerist painting can be bad, bad, for instance, as Welles' *Othello* is bad, I had not been expecting the worst; I had not expected that it might be boring. Orson Welles boring! And boring to stupefaction.

Let me make it clear at the outset that the least of my reservations about the film, before having seen it, was that *The Trial* by Welles was not likely to be much like *The Trial* by Kafka. Apart from the fact that it might be difficult to imagine two individuals temperamentally and stylistically more dissimilar, I like to think I take a liberal attitude in general towards the free adaptation of literary works for the screen. After all, we don't reject Berg's *Wozzeck* because it is not Buechner's; as soon as we hear the music, we realise we are in the presence of something related to but also enormously different from the play. Similarly, as soon as we see a strange man enter Joseph K.'s bedroom "one fine morning" (although, in the film, this isn't the first thing that we see), we are plunged, or should be, into an order of experience quite different from that of a reader of the novel.

Furthermore, in the particular case of *The Trial*, Welles has been provided with a rather considerable precedent in the way of free adaptation; I mean *Le Procès*, the version for the stage made by Jean-Louis Barrault, in collaboration with André Gide. It is a production I did not see, but, to judge from the account given of it by Eric Bentley in *In Search of Theater*, Welles' film would seem to derive from the prior theatrical adaptation to an even greater extent than from the original novel; indeed, the one photograph of the Barrault production included by Bentley shows the stage, via the designer's distortion of perspective, given the effect of a camera's low angle, exactly the kind of camera set-up which Welles virtually patented in his earliest films.

At one point in the film, we see an aggregation of what appears to be victimised Jews, inmates of a ghetto or concentration camp, standing motionless, in tableau, in front of the tenement to which K. goes for his interrogation; these Jews have their antecedent not in the novel but in the play alone, in which they figured as a kind of chorus. But, whereas their repeated use on the stage played its part in the larger theatrical conception, their single brief appearance in the film serves only to create an eerie effect, for the instant: they recede into the movie's *mise en scène*; they are picturesque. Much else of what is in the film is not so much a departure from the earlier adaptation as a merely physical extension of it beyond the boundaries of what can be presented on a stage. In Kafka's novel, an office is recognisably an office; what is surreal is what is taking place in it. On Barrault's stage, according to Bentley, the telephone on Joseph K.'s desk was about eighteen inches long. In Welles' film, K.'s office has been given the dimensions of a large aircraft hangar.

In fact, it is not an aircraft hangar but a great unused industrial fairground, complete with 1,500 desks, which alternates with the film's primary location, a huge, abandoned railway terminal, scheduled for demolition, the finding of which as a set for *The Trial* Welles is reported to consider his greatest stroke of good fortune in the making of the film. And, indeed, it is this set, with its vast, cavernous expanse of space, redecorated and used for almost all of the interiors, which

provides the film with its most impressive feature. Kafka's novel, too, conveys a vivid sense of space, but space, in the novel, is always cramped, confining, oppressive, stifling. In the text, the interrogation chamber is described as a medium-sized, two-windowed room just below the roof of which is a gallery "where the people were able to stand only in a bent posture with their heads and backs knocking against the ceiling." In the film, the interrogation chamber becomes an arena on the order of Madison Square Garden, packed by the proverbial "cast of thousands." The airless labyrinth which is the law-court offices in the novel becomes, in the film, a balconied edifice of files. The painter Titorelli's 'studio', a room in which "you could scarcely take two strides in any direction," and in which, as at the law-court offices, K. nearly faints from the airlessness, becomes an area large enough for Welles to execute some elaborate movement of the camera; and the stairway leading up to Titorelli's place—"extremely narrow, very long, without any turning . . . enclosed on either side by blank walls"—on which K. encounters the "several" monstrous young girls in the novel, now accommodates throngs of them; again, the principle of the cast of thousands. And on, and on. Describing the design of *Le Procès* as theatre, Bentley mentions the influence of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*; in Welles' film, what one sees are occasional bits and pieces out of *Caligari* inflated to a scale more nearly reminiscent of *Metropolis*.

But, whereas the design of *Le Procès* strove for an interpretation and theatrical re-stylisation of the novel, the film manages to achieve neither interpretation nor style, unless decor may be called style. The sole impetus of the film appears to be the immensity of the set: it is as though the film were made to display the set; Kafka's *The Trial* just an afterthought; something with which to fill it. Through the space of this set, Welles can practise unrestrictedly what has become his chief contribution to the art of the film in recent years, the conversation held between two people as one walks briskly away from the other. So Fräulein Montag, who limps, heard but unseen, through the halls of K.'s boarding-house, moving her belongings, in the novel, now drags a steamer trunk across a vast empty landscape as K. pursues her; and the advocate's lodgings attain the size of a gymnasium so that the characters may run laps around it. It all has so little to do with Kafka's *The Trial*, or any interpretation of it, however free, that I almost feel it irrelevant on my part to make any comparative mention of the two. Throughout the film, action and events taken from the novel have been telescoped and transposed so meaninglessly that the only purpose of the alterations seems to be to prove that Welles, as director of the film, has the power to make them, which, obviously, he has.

In Kafka's world, surreal happenings arise almost imperceptibly out of a setting of everyday reality, so that it is virtually impossible to tell where what is ordinary ends and what is mad begins; in Welles' film, one bizarre event follows another, without connection. Specifically: in the novel, K. is supposed to conduct a foreign business colleague, interested in ancient monuments, on a tour of the local cathedral; when the man fails to arrive at the appointed hour for their meeting inside the almost entirely empty cathedral, K. makes ready to leave, but a verger directs his attention toward a side aisle in which, he becomes aware, preparations are apparently being made for the preaching of a service. Although there is no congregation present other than K., a priest begins to mount the pulpit; K. attempts to leave before the beginning of the sermon obliges him to stay, but, just as he reaches the exit, he is stopped by the voice of the priest calling after him, calling



him by name. As this incident appears in the film, K. simply walks from one part of the huge expressionistic set to another, and, in just vaguely identifiable surroundings, a vaguely identifiable man addresses him from a vaguely identifiable balcony. It isn't Kafka. It isn't style. Nor is it an interpretation.

But, to be sure, minutes before the end, we are given what is, I believe, intended to be recognised as interpretation. It comes in the form of some dialogue, or more precisely chatter, about the responsibility of the individual and society which passes between K. and his advocate, who, in departure from the novel, makes a reappearance in the cathedral following the business with the priest. This food for thought having been served, the advocate relates to K. an abridged version of Kafka's great parable of the Law by means of a series of slides, "visual aids," as the advocate calls them. I realise, as I put this down, that these inventions of the film may actually sound audacious, in the way that Welles could once be genuinely and excitingly audacious, but, in the seeing, it all has the stale air of yesterday's audacity.

And then—in one final stab at something like interpretation—there is the Bomb, its blast, in the film's final, prolonged image, hovering significantly over all that has gone before it. What has happened immediately before, as I understand it and I think I do, is that K. dies in an explosion of dynamite, but manages also to kill his executioners; at the end he laughs, maniacally but also, perhaps, somewhat triumphantly, if anything about the film may be described as triumph; at any

rate, the laughter does stop. Gone is the novel's knife plunged into K.'s heart, and twisted; gone K.'s dying realisation: "Like a dog!" Instead, the familiar mushroom cloud, with all its attendant, unearned Significance. It is Significance on the order of the "crucifixion" of Ahab—Ahab, the Antichrist!—in John Huston's film of *Moby Dick*. It is Significance in the abstract, Significance emptied of all significance.

But by now you've got the point. Yes, it's not Kafka. Yes, yes, it's bad. But how to account for the merciless boredom—my trial? For the moment, let me postpone that question.

\* \* \*

More and more, the career of Orson Welles has come to take on distressing parallels to that of his creation, Charles Foster Kane, and as Welles said of Kane, in the previews to his first film, "Ladies and gentlemen, I don't know what you'll think about Mr. Kane. I can't imagine. You see, I play the part myself. Well, Kane is a hero and a scoundrel, a no-account and a swell guy . . . a great lover, a great American citizen, and a dirty dog. That depends upon who's talking about him." One hardly knows whether to laugh or cry.

And thus, depending upon who's talking about him, Welles' later failures are either treated with excessive charity—the boy wonder is marking time, this story goes, but twenty years is a lot of time—or his earlier achievements belittled, both being instances of that form of rewriting history by which the consistency of criticism manages to triumph over the inconsistencies of fact. Well, they *are* failures, but they *were* achievements. It is possible, perhaps, to dismiss *Citizen Kane* as little more than a bag of tricks, good tricks but tricks nonetheless; yet, although much of that film's excitement derives from the sheer exuberance and audacity—real audacity—of its exploration of the medium's techniques, I think this is considerably to underestimate the work. But one may concede the case of *Citizen Kane*, and still there is *The Magnificent Ambersons*, a less perfect work, perhaps; also, I think, a finer one. Beginning with its apparently random and casual collection of nostalgic images of bygone styles in clothes and motor-cars, like so many snapshots from a family album, the film quietly deepens and extends itself into an almost aching sorrowful picture of a vanished style of life, and of irrecoverable loss; and, in so doing, manages to achieve what *Citizen Kane*, in all its brilliant eclecticism, never does: a unified style of its own. And it is style as practised by a film-maker capable of raising style to the level at which it becomes indistinguishable from genius.

But it is style—as, in Welles' work, it was never again to be—pressed wholly into the service of meaning. Nothing is gratuitous; from the sleigh ride through an impossibly soft and radiant snowscape, the snow as surreal as that which floats through Kane's crystal globe, the sleigh itself thereafter to give way to fuming, sputtering automobiles, to the "last of the great, long-remembered dances" at the Amberson mansion, all of the film's imagery is darkened and complicated by a sense, an almost tragic sense, of the impermanence of all that appears solid and substantial, and of the evanescence of all that is beautiful. *The Magnificent Ambersons* is, like *Citizen Kane*, about a man's fall, but also about the fall of a house, and of a society. The film's narrative remains faithful to that of the Booth Tarkington psychological novel from which it was adapted, but what Welles brings to that narrative, not in the novel, above all, is mystery. It is a quality which arises, in part, from the difference between the greyish naturalism of the language of the novel and the rich chiaroscuro of the imagery of the film. But the film's imagery itself seems, finally, to arise from the apprehension of some deeper kind of mystery: that mystery inherent in the way men come to be as they are, and in the way all power declines and dies.

Rita Hayworth and Orson Welles  
in "The Lady from Shanghai".





And, when all the tricks are emptied from *Citizen Kane's* bag of tricks, it is that sense of mystery which still remains. Although an audience conditioned to psychological explanation may salivate when one character says that Kane wanted to be loved, and nod in perfect understanding at the closing confrontation with "Rosebud", the psychological explanation is, finally, just one of several explanations proffered by the characters in the film, and this in a film everywhere filled with the implication that any single explanation, indeed, *any* explanation, must remain inadequate to the mystery which a person may contain.

As the reporter and his staff prepare to leave the Kane mansion, a photographer asks him if he ever did find out what Rosebud means. "No," he replies, "I never did. Maybe Rosebud was something he couldn't get, or something he lost, but I don't think it would have explained anything, anyway. I don't think any word can explain a man's life. I guess Rosebud is just a piece in a jigsaw puzzle. A missing piece."\* It is the film's final irony: we *do* discover what Rosebud is, and still do not know what it means. A burning sled . . . a sled, outside the Kanes' old cabin, gradually becoming buried in the ceaselessly falling snow . . . a line: "I was on the way to the warehouse in search of my youth": what is it all but an evocation of the past, of irretrievable loss, retaining all its mystery, explaining nothing. And so the film ends: the sled in flames; the fire obliterating the painted word; the great castle, its lights extinguished, its chimneys billowing forth the smoke of Kane's possessions as they burn; antique statuary, mysterious wharves, silent pools; and the camera moving down a wire fence, gliding past a posted warning, ending the film with the words with which it began, now deepened in meaning, now implicating us: No Trespassing.

If I appear to dwell on Welles' two earliest films, it is because, for all the attention that has been paid to them as works of technical brilliance, they yet remain insufficiently appreciated as works of art; that, and the fact that, among Welles' subsequent films, there is little else to dwell upon. *Citizen Kane* is not a profound work, but, aside from that, it is almost everything else one might wish a first work to be: unmistakably individual, exploratory, exuberant, charged with an excitement undiminished after twenty years; and *The Magnificent Ambersons* is, I think, one of the most mysteriously beautiful motion pictures ever made.

The films that Welles has made since must be at least partially understood in relation to some of the factual background to their production. *Citizen Kane* was preceded by two projects, one of them a highly experimental treatment for the filming of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, which Welles' employers chose finally to reject: *The Magnificent Ambersons* followed only after two more abortive works. By this time, the financial receipts from *Citizen Kane* had begun to come in, and the studio assumed control of the editing of Welles' second film, reportedly excising as much as thirty minutes from the work as he had planned it as well as inserting a few brief sequences not directed by him. *Journey Into Fear*, the third finished film with which Welles was involved, was eventually reassigned for completion into the hands of one of the studio's routine commercial directors. After Welles had shot hundreds of thousands of feet of film for his next work, studio powers decided the project was to be abandoned: it has never been

\* Although the usual objection to *Citizen Kane* is that the character of Kane is, finally, too simple-minded in its conception, I would argue, rather, that Kane does not even exist as a character in the sense in which we conventionally construe the meaning of this. Kane is a force which we know only through its impact on various bodies; our sole "objective" glimpse of him is at the moment of his death, at which the force that he contains escapes him. Or he is an image, a fragmented image, which, unlike that of a jigsaw puzzle, cannot be put back together; for what we see of Kane, in the various evocations of him, is contradictory, and incomplete; we can never possess all the pieces, and those we have can never exactly be made to fit.



Anthony Perkins in "The Trial".

released; and his employment terminated. Until *The Trial*, only *Citizen Kane*, among his films, was released exactly as Welles had wanted it.

Yet *Journey Into Fear*, despite the fact that the credit for its direction is not given to Welles, is everywhere stamped with the mark of his individuality, as are the two other melodramas which sporadically succeeded it, *The Stranger* and *The Lady From Shanghai*. All are witty, exciting, above all enormously entertaining; and, if their brilliance seems to reside largely on their surface, well, where else should brilliance be? They are

Orson Welles as the chief of police in his thriller "Touch of Evil".







"The Magnificent Ambersons": Joseph Cotten, Ray Collins, Dolores Costello and Agnes Moorehead.

melodramas; only their enthusiasts have pretended they are more; although, at least in the case of the last, one alarming, three-dimensional character is quite indelibly created: Glenn Anders as the horrendous Mr. Grisby. Then, in 1948, Welles made his first film of Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, with himself in the leading role. It is a film easily dismissed as a production of the play, with all its textual rearrangement and, but for Welles and Dan O'Herlihy, generally abominable acting; it is also by far the most interesting film made of Shakespeare to take the line that an adaptation of a play into film requires as radical and complete a transformation of the original materials as does the adaptation of a play into opera.

Welles made his *Macbeth* on a slender budget in little more than three weeks—he has called it, "for better or worse . . . a kind of violently sketched charcoal drawing of a great play"—and, if he allowed most of the performances to go blatantly to hell, it was not because of any inability on his part to direct actors; it would be difficult to match the ensemble playing of Welles' Mercury Theatre company in his first two films with that in many others. Welles' preoccupation in *Macbeth* is clearly with inventing a line of visual imagery raised to the level of the language, even if, in the accomplishment, what more often resulted was a reduction of the language to the level of the visual imagery. One would really have to be, at the least, a Verdi wholly to succeed in what Welles was attempting, and Welles is not this. Still, while the achievement of Welles' film is decidedly not that of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, the film does manage to achieve a striking, genuinely barbaric splendour of

its own. And, despite the film's many failures, bearing in mind the ways that *Macbeth* has been done badly on our stages, from the respectful dullness of a Maurice Evans to the sensational hysterics of a Judith Anderson, it would be a mistake to underestimate that not inconsiderable achievement.

\* \* \*

What happened to Welles' great gifts as a film-maker during the four years that elapsed between *Macbeth* and the completion of his *Othello*, I cannot pretend to be able to say. It is not that it is difficult to speculate upon the causes of so spectacular a decline; it is all too easy. But the facts are these: *Macbeth* was made in approximately three weeks, at the end of a period during which Welles may be said to have worked with some regularity as a film-maker; *Othello* was made over a period of four years, one of only four films Welles has directed to completion since 1948. What happened, I cannot pretend to say, but I can guess, and I would guess that Welles has always been the kind of artist whose genius lies in his intuition, who is, time and again, betrayed by his premeditation; and four years is a long time to premeditate. But more important, I would guess, is the very fact that Welles has been able so infrequently to work unrestrictedly in the medium, for the apparent consequence of this has been an obsession with the medium *per se*.

The special badness of Welles' *Othello*, with all its fussy inflation of eye-catching details, is of a kind to make the freewheeling carelessness of his *Macbeth* seem positively invigorating by comparison. It is the details, in fact, which



take over this *Othello*, crowding out character and action, almost, but not quite, crowding out everything that is the play. All is sacrificed to the *mise en scène*, but it is a *mise en scène* now become an orgy of tilted camera angles, intricate composition, and florid chiaroscuro. Concern is now exclusively for effects, and not effects directed toward the end of any total meaning but rather isolated effects, singular flashes of brilliance (and some, admittedly, brilliant), indulged in only for themselves. Each scene is invested with an impact out of all proportion to its meaning or its relevance to context; each scene played and shot as though it were climactic. Gone is the marvellous continuity of *Citizen Kane*; given way to a monotonous fluidity (almost every transition is a quick dissolve) as discrete, supercharged images flow one into the other. There is a word for Welles' film of *Othello*. It suffers not from lack of talent; rather, from a conspicuous waste of it. All has grown overripe; the individual cells have developed at the expense of the organism as a whole. The word is decadent.

And it is that word which best characterises all of Welles' films since. There is little to choose from between *Confidential Report*\* and *Touch of Evil*; of the two, I tend to prefer the former, which seems to me more willing to accept itself at its own level of preposterousness, rather than go rummaging about among half-baked profundities. But, whatever one's preferences, such distinctions as may be drawn between the two are fine, and *Touch of Evil* is, I think, extremely bad, its badness perhaps somewhat obscured by the fact that it was probably the most interesting film to come from Hollywood in 1958; in time of great drought, even hemlock appears drinkable. It is melodrama again, as was *Confidential Report*, but, whereas Welles was once able to use his camera ingeniously to enhance such material, here the camera, with few exceptions, just gets in the way, intruding on the action, complicating it unnecessarily, further cluttering a film already, in its narrative, prodigally cluttered. *Touch of Evil* probably contains more irrelevant movement per frame than anything else yet committed to film, movement finally signifying nothing so much as Welles' radical failure as a director; yet what remains glaringly apparent, despite all the camera's agitation, is Welles' corresponding failure as an actor. In *Touch of Evil*, he manages wholly to accomplish what one saw only intermittently realised in his playing of Othello: the reduction of himself to the status of a prop, a fabrication of the make-up room, a triumph of paste and putty. Even his fatness fails to exist as a human quality; it is simply another grotesque; fatness in the abstract. Among more zealous lovers of cinema, *Touch of Evil* has attained something of the status of Welles' masterpiece; and for those, not necessarily cinema enthusiasts, who just relish the spectacle of a prodigious talent recklessly exploring all possible ways wastefully to expend itself, *Touch of Evil* is, indeed, highly recommended. I found it profoundly depressing.

Still, bad as *Othello* and *Confidential Report* and *Touch of Evil* are, they manage to remain enjoyable on some level, however disturbing in their implications: *Othello* as an exercise in the rococo; *Confidential Report* as nonsense; *Touch of Evil* as camp, with Marlene Dietrich and Zsa Zsa Gabor running through their bits as special "guest stars", unbilled appearances by Joseph Cotten in spectacles and white moustache and Mercedes McCambridge in black leather jacket, and a prominently displayed player piano presumably left over from *Beat the Devil*. Bad as they are, they aren't boring. Which brings me back to *The Trial*, and my postponed question.

If the essential difference between Welles' *Macbeth* and his *Othello* is that of using the medium to serve the play and using the play to serve the medium, what we have in *The Trial* is a case of there being no play, only medium. Even *Touch of Evil*,

largely, I would guess, thanks to what is left of the thriller from which it was derived, has its characters and plot, threadbare and tattered as they may respectively be. To some extent, simply because *Othello* is a play, because it exists in its language and its action (not to mention, that is, its greatness), there is enough inherent strength in what remains from the play, in Welles' *Othello*, to survive even so bad a production of it as his—and it would be difficult to imagine a worse one†. But take away Kafka's style, and his tone, and what have you? Take away the logic and order of Joseph K.'s nightmare, and what is there left? What Welles gives us is a succession of discrete grotesqueries, each exploited for its own grotesqueness to the end of being picturesque.

Again, what is paramount is the *mise en scène*, but it is *mise en scène* finally freed from the dictates imposed by some narrative or dramatic necessity. For a subject makes certain demands of an artist; in an absolute sense, it limits his freedom of choices; but Welles, in surrendering subject, has attained a kind of absolute freedom. The *mise en scène* no longer has a reason, no longer is governed by some controlling centre. As if by centrifugal force, things fly apart; everything moves out towards the marvellous periphery. The vacuum created, Shakespeare can fill, Kafka cannot. All the activity on the surface of Welles' latest film will not disguise the lack of substance, the gaping void, at its centre. And, elaborate as is the superstructure, it cannot but collapse.

So *The Trial*, boredom and all, is, finally, not without its value. It is, in fact, an object lesson; and, if it does Welles' career as a whole less than justice to end so emphatically upon this lesson, I shall have to pay my debt to justice another time. In *The Trial*, what Welles has actually given us, in an idiom which appears to be narrative or dramatic, is an instance of pure *mise en scène*, *mise en scène* freed of all necessity, concerned solely with independent visual effects. Perhaps a director of greater genius than Welles could do this and make it continuously interesting; but I doubt it. For I think that, with something like the regularity of a law, any attempt to make pure cinema, or, for that matter, pure poetry, out of the materials of narrative or drama, materials whose natural end is in the discovery of meaning, results in something neither meaningful nor good cinema or poetry. Were *The Trial* visually beautiful to see, there would be no boredom, but the fact is that, for all the attention lavished on the refinement of the film's surface, that surface is one of an almost unrelieved ugliness; to John Grierson's famous dictum—when a director dies, he becomes a photographer—one feels compelled, on such evidence as *The Trial*, to add the corollary that, when the photographer is a dead director, he will be a bad photographer. How to begin to do justice to what is projected on the screen: that incoherent litter of bric-à-brac which passes for its composition; the crude contrastiness of its lighting; those graceless movements of actors and camera; that spastic cutting; those static set-ups, and takes which seem to last for ever? For anyone familiar with Orson Welles' talents at their peak, even more shocking than how bad *The Trial* is, is how bad it looks: it looks like the dregs of Cinema 16. And, as Pauline Kael has somewhere observed of them, like every message from the *avant-garde*, species Cinema 16, from three minutes in length on up, it closes with the Bomb, that all-purpose, photogenic emblem of deep meaning and universal significance. Only never before has that well-known mushroom cloud been so unphotogenic; never so meaningless.

\* Known in America as *Mr. Arkadin*.

† For the thoroughgoing demolition job on Welles' *Othello*, and one that is eminently fair, I refer the reader to Eric Bentley, "Orson Welles and Two Othellos," in *What is Theatre?*



**Our** correspondents at Cannes, Venice and elsewhere have already written about many of the 1963 festival films ; other pictures have been, or will be, reviewed on their London openings. Here Tom Milne and Robert Vas discuss features and shorts respectively, and a group of SIGHT AND SOUND writers sum up their festival impressions.

★★★★ TO ★ INDICATE CRITICS' RATINGS ● EXPRESSES ANTIPATHY	BRENDA DAVIES	PETER JOHN DYER	JOHN GILLETT	PETER HARCOURT	PENELOPE HOUSTON	TOM MILNE	ERIC RHODE	DAVID ROBINSON	JOHN RUSSELL TAYLOR
Abhijan (Satyajit Ray)	★★		★★★★			★			★
Au Coeur de la Vie (Robert Enrico)	●		★	★★	★★	★	★		★
An Autumn Afternoon (Ozu)	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★
The Balcony (Joseph Strick)		★	★★	●	★★	★★	★	★	★★
Barravento (Glauber Rocha)	★	●	●	★		●	●		
I Basilischi (Lina Wertmüller)	★★★★	★★★	★★★		★★★	★★	★★		★★★
La Belle Vie (Robert Enrico)	★				●	●	●		●
Les Carabiniers (Godard)	●	★★★	★★★	★★	★★★	★★★★	?		★★★
The Chair (Drew-Leacock)			★★					★★	
Il Demonio (Brunello Rondi)	★★★	★★★	★	★	●	★★★	●		★★★★
Dragées au Poivre (Baratier)	★★	★	★	★★	★	★		●	★
En Compagnie de Max Linder	★★		★★★		★★★	★★		★★★★	★★★
Le Feu Follet (Louis Malle)	★★	★★★★	★★★		★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★★
I Fidanzati (Ermanno Olmi)	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★★
The Golden Fern (Jiri Weiss)			★	★		★★			
Hallelujah the Hills (A. Mekas)	★★		★	★★	●	●	●	●	★★★
Harold Lloyd's Funny Side of Life	★★★		★★★	★					★★
How to be Loved (Wojciech Has)	★★	★	★★		★	★	●	★	★
Le Joli Mai (Chris Marker)			★★★	★★	★★	★★★	★		
Love in the Suburbs (Tamas Fejer)			★			★★			
Magnet of Doom (Melville)	★★	★★	★★	★	★★	★★★	★		★★
Le Mani Sulla Città (Rosi)	★★	★★	★★★	★	★★	★★	★	★★★★	★★
Muriel (Alain Resnais)	★★★★	★★★★	?	●	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★	★
Ouranos (Takis Kanelopoulos)	★	●		★		●		★★	
Passenger (Andrzej Munk)	★★		★★★	★★★		★★★	★		★★
Paula Cautiva (Fernando Ayala)			★			★			
Rogopag (Rossellini)	●	★	★★	★	★	★	●		●
Rogopag (Gregoretti)	★★	★★	★	★	★	★	★		★
Rogopag (Godard)	★	★★	★	●	★★	★★★★	★★		★★★
Rogopag (Pasolini)	★	★★★	★★	●	★★	★	★★		★★
The Roof Garden (Torre Nilsson)		★★★	★★	★	★★	★★	★★	★★	★★
The Russian Miracle (Thorndikes)			★						
Sunday in September (J. Donner)			★	★	★	★		★★	
The Trial (Orson Welles)	★★★	★★	★★★	●	●	★★	★	★	★
El Verdugo (Luis Berlanga)			★★			★★		★★★	★★
Wild Dog Dingo (Yuly Karasik)			★★						



# LONDON FESTIVAL



"LES CARABINIERS."

## Indirections

A COUPLE OF YEARS AGO, amid the head-shaking about ivory towers which surrounded the *nouvelle vague*, Truffaut cheerfully put his head into the lion's mouth when asked why he refused to take up positions on contemporary problems. To do so, Truffaut replied, "one would have to give precedence to man in the plural rather than man in the singular." Time, his films, and—more particularly—Godard's films, have proved him triumphantly right.

The best films in the London Festival all had "small" subjects—*Muriel*, *I Fidanzati*, *An Autumn Afternoon*—or gave "small" treatment to big subjects—*Les Carabiniers*, *Passenger*. Not that there weren't films taking up firm positions, on the question of war for instance. About half of the shorts, it seemed, ended up with the big bang warning (simple repetition, one recalls, once led to that fabled "Wolf! Wolf!" fiasco). Two features, *Ouranos* and *Au Coeur de la Vie*, faced man with the horror of war. Both were gentle, elegiac, exquisitely horrified for man in the plural: war, they cried with an air of tender discovery, is really very horrid. Yes, indeed. But since 1945 we have been bombarded with the heroics and the denunciations, with definitive films on every aspect of the subject; and after *Hiroshima mon Amour*, things could never be quite the same. Yet both *Ouranos* and *Au Coeur de la Vie* revert to simple positions to make the outraged plea, and remain dull, pretty to look at, and wholesomely uninspiring.

The Polish film, *How to Be Loved*, tried harder with an ironic anecdote about a woman who, sacrificing herself for the partisan cause and the man she loved, finds herself vilified by both after the war. Interestingly, the film comes off best in the framework scenes, where the woman, now a successful TV actress, recalls her past during a flight to Paris. Her barbed relationships with her fellow passengers as she gets unhappily drunk are caustically observed, and excite speculation as to how she came to be that way. The flashback scenes tell us all too clearly, as Has recreates wartime Occupation as we have seen it a hundred times before: hungry-faced men whispering in cafés, the stamp of Gestapo boots outside a door, the leering officer forcing his way into the bedroom . . .

What makes *Muriel* and *I Fidanzati* so arresting is their elliptical approach. Nothing is quite as it seems. Or is it? It is this doubt, this forcing of the eye and mind, which rivets the attention. "By indirections find directions out," as Polonius craftily suggested. But it is not enough to stick a couple of indirections down on film and expect to find a direction, as Robert Enrico (of *Au Coeur de la Vie*) demonstrates in *La Belle Vie*, where the story of a politically indifferent young Frenchman's efforts to carve a good living for himself is hopefully intercut with newsreel footage of race rioting and brutality. Lacking any sort of interlocking device such as those used by Resnais and Olmi, the component parts of *La Belle Vie* remain obstinately unrhymed.

It is possible that *Passenger* might have been less interesting





Concentration camp guards in "Passenger".

if Munk had been able to finish it before he died. Up to a point it is just another film about the hideousness of concentration camps, rather better made than most, with an added oddity in its Lesbian battle between the German camp supervisor and the Jewish girl she befriends. The unfinished film, however, completed with stills and commentary, does follow Polonius' lead. We see, for instance, stills of the German woman on a liner after the war; of another woman walking up the gang-plank; of the German woman's distress. Neutrally, the narrator explains that she thinks she recognises the second woman as someone she knew during the war. We plunge into the German's story of what had happened, are told by the narrator that this is a lie, and move into a second story.

By fits and starts, the story progresses: action scenes broken by stills, dialogue scenes followed by scenes where the dialogue, not yet dubbed, is supplied in narration. The effect is of a Chinese box, enclosing not only the truth of Munk's intention, but of the German's story, of the relationship between the two women, and even, of the real identity of the woman who boards the ship. Whether Munk intended us to or not, we never come to the inside box, and the film ends with the narration dying out in mid-sentence on a note of query. The result is twofold. We are so captured by the puzzling intensity of the struggle between the two women that their surroundings recede into the background: this is a story about two women, not about a concentration camp. On the other hand, these surroundings are presented with such vivid, formal beauty that we are aware primarily of their aesthetic quality; but their true meaning burrows subliminally, to emerge with fresh ferocity later. One of the first stills used in the film, for instance, is a haunting shot of a group of Alsatian dogs, arranged in geometrical pattern against the barbed wire. Later, the dogs are paraded round the camp perimeter, and later still we witness one of them savaging a prisoner. No link is drawn between the three shots, but they fuse to produce, from the pleasure of the first and the savagery of the last, a new awareness.

*Passenger*, in fact, is a curious kaleidoscope of contradictions: of reality (patient files of children shepherd into the extermination chambers) and unreality (bodies, very obviously dummies, hanging on the gallows); the emotionally convincing (the German's distress at what she takes to be the Jewish girl's

contempt), and the unconvincing (the Jewish girl's supposed idyll with her lover, also a prisoner); the aesthetically pleasing (a ring of women in a moonlit field, linking hands like children to prevent the escape of the one selected to die), and the aesthetically grating (a calm shot of a lorry in a courtyard, only a naked arm crooked over the side indicating that it is full of corpses). At the end we are driven to ask again, what was a concentration camp, what was it *really* like?

In *Les Carabiniers* Godard, too, turns the coin over to show us the other face. It might seem that here, for the first time, Godard has made a film about man in the plural, paradoxically without shifting his ground an inch. In effect, however, *Les Carabiniers* is still about man in the singular. Refusing to offer the usual social palliatives about no one dying in vain, and all this suffering must never happen again, etc. etc., Godard takes a brutally realistic view: war is, quite simply, a fact, and it will go on being a fact as long as men believe that it can serve any purpose, good or bad. For the individual, the true end-product is futility, not glory, or heroism, or the preservation of some international status quo: all he can gain is paper promises which are irredeemable, and he stakes the only thing he really owns, his life. Perhaps it is because Godard suggests so unanswerably that the criminal stupidity of war is the product of the endless stupidity of man, that the film has been so viciously attacked.

The most penetrating thing that has been said about *Les Carabiniers*, as Godard himself suggests in a brilliant defence of his film (*Cahiers du Cinéma*, August 1963), came in a hostile review by Claude Mauriac, complaining bitterly that Godard's use of wartime documentary material is an insult to all the young men killed in the last war, pressed as involuntary extras in this "pitiful farce". Godard, quite rightly, takes this as a compliment, for it is the particular strength of *Les Carabiniers* that these newsreel shots are perfectly integrated, both emotionally and texturally, into the film: and what it is saying, in effect, is that war is simply the destruction of involuntary extras in a pitiful farce.

Following to the letter his opening quote from Borges ("The longer I live, the more I tend towards simplicity . . ."), Godard has told a simple story, and told it with a Rabelaisian ribaldry and cutting edge. Like all good fables, it has a beginning, a middle and an end, and follows Godard's favourite three-movement construction. (1) In no particular place, at no particular time, the Carabiniers come to tell two men, Ulysses and Michael Angelo, that the King requires their services. Persuasively, the Carabiniers explain that war means that they may kill, loot, do anything they like. They are persuaded. (2) Ulysses and Michael Angelo experience war. (3) They return with a suitcase of postcards, representing the riches of the world which they have won. They go to claim their riches; revolution has broken out and the King's men are in flight; a Carabinier quietly shoots them. The first and last sections are grotesque, Ionesco-like in tone. The second is an almost documentary reconstruction of the horrors of war. Partly because the rough actuality texture of the newsreel is preserved throughout, partly because the savagery or imbecility of each section overflows to the others, the tones overlap. And because the imbecile heroes shade into anonymity in the central section, where they are often indistinguishable from soldiers in a newsreel, those anonymous soldiers become identified with them (and vice versa) in a cruelly bitter comment.

So much has been written about the casual, brutal inhumanity of Godard in general and *Les Carabiniers* in particular, that it may be worth reiterating something which ought to be obvious from the texture of his films—the fact that he cares, deeply. But each of his films aims so successfully at drawing attention to the coarse, unpolished, here-and-now surface of life as it is being lived at that very moment, that one is almost unaware that, under the surface, concern is very much present. Indirections again. Sometimes it comes through a



simple, but perfectly legitimate trick: for instance, the double-take on the partisan girl, when her cap is snatched off and her long blonde hair falls over her shoulders. This halting of time to repeat a movement is, in itself, a gesture of tenderness which is unmistakably clear. Throughout the film there are moments which convey, even more simply and imperceptibly, the pleasure in life which is being destroyed: the gesture of the woman who is allowed to send her daughter into the kitchen before Michael Angelo "amuses" himself with her; soldiers sliding like children on the frozen surface of a river; a forest clearing on a frosty morning, waiting with patient calm for the shooting of the hostages. And Michael Angelo's astonished "Encore?", repeated over and over again as bullets are pumped into the partisan girl's body and still she lives, is (like the slicing of the eye in *Chien Andalou*) a challenge to the audience: how will you react? Will you turn away in horror, or will you simply laugh at the absurdity?

TOM MILNE

## Short Films

SIXTY-SEVEN SHORT FILMS, carefully selected, are bound to provide some sort of cross-section of what the genre has to offer. In fact the London Festival selection confirmed what one had only suspected over the past few years: that there is at present a decline in the field of live action shorts. The heroic age is over; the pulse no longer quickens as it did for *Sang des Bêtes*, or *Toute la Mémoire du Monde*, or *Two Men and a Wardrobe*. It is not personalities like Franju or Resnais or Polanski that one misses (individuality cannot and should not repeat itself). Rather, there seems to be a slackening of vitality in the genre as a whole.

Let's first take short fiction, that gateway to the feature film. In many ways it is more difficult to make a good short feature than a long one. Locale, action and character have to be concentrated; but the film, like a good short story, must justify its chosen length by finding its own unity. This is where *A Time out of War* so splendidly succeeded, and what Robert Enrico tries to achieve in vain with the formal brilliance and literary overtones of his Ambrose Bierce adaptations in *Au Coeur de la Vie*. Louis Terme's *Girl of the Road* strikes a simpler and more genuine note with its industrial landscape and portrait of a factory girl; but the story of her emotional problems, evoked during a dreary daily bus trip to and from work, finally outgrows its naturalistic dimensions and begins to lose its way. The first moments of *The War Game*, an ambitious short feature by Mai Zetterling, promise style and unity in the story of two children fighting over a toy gun. As they climb higher and higher up the stairs of a clinically modern building, well-chosen camera angles, good picture and sound editing, and effective acting from the children, produce a genuine sense of cruelty, a feeling that anything may happen. Our disappointment is the greater when at a certain point we realise that the children are, in fact, acting out an adult parable about divided mankind on the brink of war. The boys lose their identity, while the parable itself seems altogether too superficial.

Chris Marker's *La Jetée* is serious and sophisticated enough to avoid such pitfalls. An intellectual essay in style and feeling, about a childhood memory pursued through past and future, always lost and always growing, the film achieves its unity of form and content by the extraordinary way it uses still photographs, the split second pinned down for eternity, for its stylised voyage through time and space and memory. This is more than just a pocket version of a Resnais subject: its evocation of horror (of a third world war which destroys Paris) is frightening and clinical, and finds a touching counterpart in its vision of love and beauty.

The best short films, in fact, were some of the features—and this is not necessarily a paradox. *Rogopag* should obviously be evaluated as four separate pieces; but as regards their



Chris Marker's "La Jetée".

anecdotal conception or their episodic form such films as Lina Wertmüller's *I Basilischi*, Olmi's *I Fidanziati*, the four "movements" in Jorn Donner's *A Sunday in September*, or the main scene in *The Roof Garden*, are in one way or another all related to short films. *Passenger* is obviously a torso; *Dragées au Poivre* a succession of small private jokes; *Les Carabiniers* an anecdote that grows into a pamphlet. Modern cinema seems to be returning to the novelette: the endeavour to grasp little and hold much within the disciplines of form imposed by the genre. A quality that in an odd way is missing from short fiction itself. But then, those who ten years ago would have begun their careers by making a short, now set up a full-length feature to experiment.

This seems to be draining the short feature of some of its energy, just as television has drained the factual documentary. The main-stream of reportage now flows through the small screen; which would be fair enough if the result were to make film documentary more personal and help it to get beyond journalism. But the festival gave us more parodies on the fact that anyone can now possess a camera and make a film, than successful results of this phenomenon.

The makers of the Canadian *September 5 at St. Henri* sprinkle their film with references to Resnais and Marker without finding a personal voice. The West German *Concentration Camp to Let*, about Dachau turned into a housing estate and visited by prying tourists, is intended to be argumentative but looks pretentious and form-conscious. On the other hand, the makers of *The Walk* (about the San Francisco to Moscow peace march) deliberately blunt the edge of a propaganda-hungry subject, to make the film a rather pessimistic essay in self-discovery. The somewhat defeatist attitude, quite a new ingredient for a campaign film, lends it a certain larger relevance. In *Gala Day* John Irvin gives us the essence of a Durham Miners' Gala: a popular feast, where political oratory is mingled with boxing-booth cheers, and vulgarity is the very source of the occasion's richness, and even its beauty. The film has an eye for detail, a flair for movement and faces, also found in the Argentinian *Brick Kiln*.

But the boom in cartoons, as opposed to the falling off in live action shorts, is so obvious that one cannot avoid speculation on its meaning. The live action short seems in danger of

(Continued on page 50)



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# one *A*

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## *the event and } michelangelo the image } antonioni*

**A** FILM-MAKER IS A MAN like any other; and yet his life is not the same. *Seeing* is for us a necessity. For a painter too the problem is one of seeing: but while for the painter it is a matter of uncovering a static reality, or at most a rhythm that can be held in a single image, for a director the problem is to catch a reality which is never static, is always moving towards or away from a moment of crystallisation, and to present this movement, this arriving and moving on, as a new perception. It is not sound—words, noises, music. Nor is it a picture—landscape, attitudes, gestures. Rather it is an indivisible whole that extends over a duration of its own which determines its very being. At this point the dimension of time comes into play, in its most modern conception. It is in this order of intuition that the cinema can acquire a new character, no longer merely figurative. The people around us, the places we visit, the events we witness—it is the spatial and temporal relations these have with each other that have a meaning for us today, and the tension that is formed between them.

This is, I think, a special way of being in contact with reality. And it is also a special reality. To lose this contact, in the sense of losing this way of being in contact, can mean sterility. That is why it is important, for a director even more than for other artists, precisely because of the complexity of the material he has between his hands, to be committed morally in some way. It is almost superfluous to point out that our effort as directors must be just that of bringing the data of our personal experience into accord with that of a more general experience, in the same way as individual time accords mysteriously with that of the cosmos. But even this effort will be sterile if we do not succeed in giving, by this means, a sincere justification of the choices which life has obliged us to make.

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The sky is white; the sea-front deserted; the sea cold and empty; the hotels white and half-shuttered. On one of the white seats of the Promenade des Anglais the bathing attendant is seated, a negro in a white singlet. It is early. The sun labours to emerge through a fine layer of mist, the same as every day. There is nobody on the beach except a single bather floating inert a few yards from the shore. There is nothing to be heard except the sound of the sea, nothing to observe except the rocking of that body. The attendant goes down to the beach and into the bathing station. A girl comes out and walks toward the sea. She is wearing a flesh-coloured costume. The cry is short, sharp, and piercing. A glance is enough

to tell that the bather is dead. The pallor of his face, the mouth full of saliva, the jaws stiff as in the act of biting, the few hairs glued to the forehead, the eyes staring, not with the fixity of death but with a troubled memory of life. The body is stretched out on the sand with the stomach in the air, the feet apart and pointing outwards. In a few moments, while the attendant attempts artificial respiration, the beach fills up with people.

A boy of ten, pushing forward a little girl of about eight, shoves his way through to watch. "Look," he says to the girl, "can you see?" "Yes" she says, very quietly. "Can you see the spit on his mouth?" "Yes." "And the swollen stomach? Do you see? It's full of water." The little girl watches as though fascinated, in silence. The boy goes on, with a kind of sadistic joy. "Now he's still white, but in a few moments he'll go blue. Look under his eyes; look, it's starting." The girl nods in assent, but remains silent: her face shows clearly that she is beginning to feel sick. The boy notices this and looks gloating. "You scared?" "No," the little girl replies in a thin voice. "Yes you are," he insists, and goes on almost chanting, "You're scared . . . you're scared . . ." After ten minutes or so the police arrive, and the beach is cleared. The attendant is the only one who remains with the policeman. Then he too goes off, summoned by a lady with violet hair for her usual lesson of gymnastics.

It was wartime. I was at Nice, waiting for a visa to go to Paris to join Marcel Carné, with whom I was going to work as an assistant. They were days full of impatience and boredom, and of news about a war which stood still on an absurd thing called the Maginot Line. Suppose one had to construct a bit of film, based on this event and on this state of mind. I would try first to remove the actual event from the scene, and leave only the image described in the first four lines. In that white sea-front, that lonely figure, that silence, there seems to me to be an extraordinary strength of impact. The event here adds nothing: it is superfluous. I remember very well that I was interested, when it happened. The dead man acted as a distraction to a state of tension.

But the true emptiness, the *malaise*, the anxiety, the nausea, the atrophy of all normal feelings and desires, the fear, the anger—all these I felt when, coming out of the Negresco, I found myself in that whiteness, in that nothingness, which took shape around a black point.

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two *A*

"THE ECLIPSE": LAST SHOT OF MONICA VITTI



*shape around a black point*

GEOFFREY NOWELL-SMITH

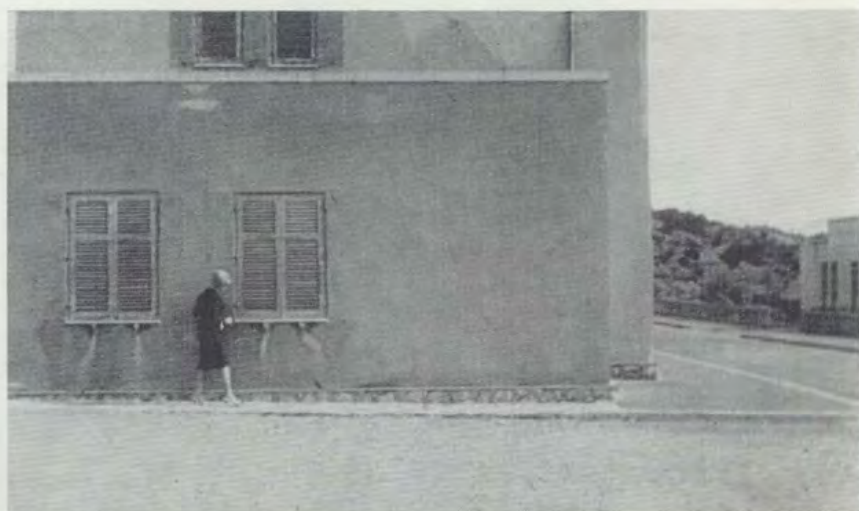
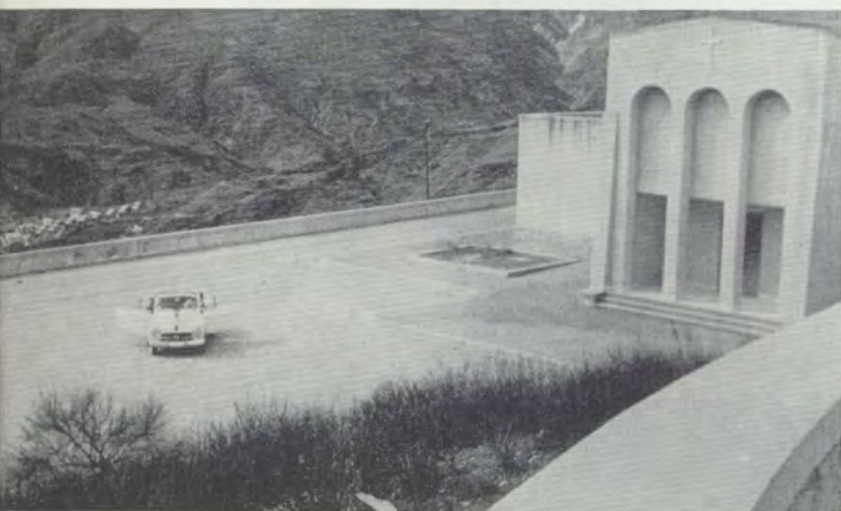
"THE ECLIPSE": THE STREET CORNER





THERE IS ONE BRIEF SCENE in *L'Avventura*, not on the face of it a very important one, which seems to me to epitomise perfectly everything that is most valid and original about Antonioni's form of cinema. It is the scene where Sandro and Claudia arrive by chance at a small village somewhere in the interior of Sicily. The village is strangely quiet. They walk around for a bit, call out. No reply, nothing. Gradually it dawns on them that the village is utterly deserted, uninhabited, perhaps never was inhabited. There is no one in the whole village but themselves, together and alone. Disturbed, they start to move away. For a moment the film hovers: the world is, so to speak, suspended for two seconds, perhaps more. Then suddenly the film plunges, and we cut to a close-up of Sandro and Claudia making love in a field—one of the most ecstatic moments in the history of the cinema, and one for which there has been apparently no formal preparation whatever. What exactly has happened?

It is not the case that Sandro and Claudia have suddenly fallen in love, or suddenly discovered at that moment that they have been in love all along. Nor, at the other extreme, is theirs a panic reaction to a sudden fear of desolation and loneliness. Nor again is it a question of the man profiting from a moment of helplessness on the part of the woman in order to seduce her. Each of these explanations contains an aspect of the truth, but the whole truth is more complicated and ultimately escapes analysis. What precisely happened in that moment the spectator will never know, and it is doubtful if the characters really know for themselves. Claudia knows that Sandro is interested in her. By coming with him to the village she has already more or less committed herself, but the actual fatal decision is neither hers nor his. It comes, when it comes, impulsively: and its immediate cause, the stimulus which provokes the response, is the feeling of emptiness and need created by the sight of the deserted village. Just as her feelings (and his too for that matter) are neither purely romantic nor purely physical, so her choice, Antonioni is saying, is neither purely determined nor purely free. She chooses, certainly, but the significance of her choice escapes her, and in a sense also she could hardly have acted otherwise.



The technical means by which all this is conveyed are no less interesting, and give further clues about Antonioni's general attitude to life and to the cinema as a means of expression. When the first shot of the village comes up, one expects it to be what is generally known as an establishing shot—that is to say something to set the scene, to establish the location and atmosphere in which the scene will develop. In fact, however, the shot *is* the scene, not an introduction to it, and the location is not just somewhere for the event to take place, but synonymous with the event itself (equally the event is the location and not just something that happens there). Antonioni does not cut away from the background to concentrate on the characters, at least not immediately. He holds his shot, all his shots, just that bit longer than would be strictly necessary for them to make their point, if there were a point to be made. He holds them in this case for as long as it takes for the spectator to become aware not only of the background, but of the characters themselves becoming aware of the background. There are no ellipses: screen time

and real time virtually correspond. But although the camera is subjective in matter of time, in that the audience's sense of time follows that of the characters, the general impression is of extreme objectivity. The spectator is never put in the character's place and encouraged to feel what the character is supposed to be feeling. On this occasion he will no doubt react in much the same way to the sense of absurdity and desolation put across by the landscape; but the important thing is not this, but rather that he should watch, with the camera, dispassionately and almost scientifically, the reactions of the characters themselves.

He has no certain guide to what they are feeling or thinking except their purely exterior reactions, fragments of behaviour; and in Antonioni films this behaviour will often seem at any given moment arbitrary and unmotivated. As a result the meaning of the film is forever in a state of flux. The behaviouristic form of observation suggests an initial determinism; somewhere in the background there is a basic pattern of cause and effect. But in practice everything is disconnected.



There is something almost capricious in the way people behave; directions are always uncertain until it is too late; and the sense of an event is never clear until after it has happened, and something else has occurred to define the significance of what went before.

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A world in which everything is surrounded by a faint halo of indeterminacy is going to be insecure in other ways as well. Empiricism has always been the agnostic's epistemology, and Antonioni is a radical agnostic. In his films there is never any certainty, any definite or absolute truth. The meaning of single events is often ambiguous, and cumulatively these events add up to a picture of a world from which order, value and logic have disappeared. This should not be taken in too metaphysical a sense. The characters in Antonioni films do not go around, like the followers of Sartre or Merleau-Ponty, earnestly trying to put back the essences into existence. They are simply faced with the business of living in a world which offers of itself no certainty and no security, at least not in the immediate present. And when a character does seem to have assured himself somehow, through his job or through his relationship with another person, his security is probably (though not necessarily: again Antonioni is not Sartre) an illusion, for which he will have to pay before long.

This sense of fundamental insecurity which affects the more lucid of Antonioni's characters (the stupid ones are generally more or less immune, and probably happier as a result) is no doubt largely subjective. Their particular existentialist inferno is very much of their own making. But in a less acute form the same general malaise can be seen to affect

Like *L'Avventura*, *The Eclipse* too sets out to expand and develop its author's ideas about the modern world, about the difficulties of living and loving in a world that has grown incomprehensible even to itself. It is therefore, like *L'Avventura*, as the critics were not slow to point out, a film about "alienation"; but it is so indirectly, and almost incidentally. Antonioni himself is categorical about this. As he sees it, the nucleus of his film is not, and could not be, a concept, particularly one so vague and indeterminate as alienation. The nucleus of *The Eclipse*, as of all his films, is a story, however slight and undramatic (and the story of *The Eclipse* is so slight as to make that of *L'Avventura* seem almost melodramatic by comparison).

The question is primarily one of emphasis. By insisting that each of his films begins with a story, particular people in a particular situation, Antonioni is asking the critic to look more at the particulars and less at the sublime but depressing generalities they supposedly reflect. The point is well taken. Except for *La Notte*, which still seems to me a deeply pessimistic film, and rather dogmatic in its pessimism into the bargain, none of Antonioni's work is ever so arid, or so alienating, as a conventional analysis of his ideas might suggest. In each of his films there is a positive pole and a negative, and a tension between them. The abstraction, the "ideology", lies mostly at the negative pole. The concrete and actual evidence, the life of the film, is more often positive—and more often neglected by criticism.

As with all Antonioni's later films, the story of *The Eclipse* is cast in the form of a sort of spiritual journey towards, ideally, self-discovery and the discovery of the world. The discovery may not be consummated; indeed the journey may



the whole of society, and to be reflected in the physical environment which modern man has created for himself and in which he has chosen to live. The deserted village in *L'Avventura* is a perfect example. Visually it recalls instantly the vacant surfaces and deranged perspectives of Chirico's *pittura metafisica*, and it means much the same thing. This civic townscape, devoid of citizens, dehumanised and absurd, in which two people come together and make love, acts in a sense as a symbol, or a parable, for the whole of modern life. Man, it seems to say, has built himself his own world, but he is incapable of living in it. He is excluded from his own creation, and his only refuge lies in fortuitous encounters with another being in the same predicament. In a word, he is "alienated".

Above and left: the sequence of the deserted village in "L'Avventura". The sequence ends with the shot of the church and empty street (above right); then a direct cut to the love scene (right).





end, as with *Il Grido* and perhaps *La Notte*, only in destruction. But it remains the ideal goal to which the central character is always being carried forward. Clelia in *Le Amiche*, Aldo in *Il Grido*, Claudia in *L'Avventura*, Lidia in *La Notte*, and Vittoria in *The Eclipse* are all variations on a single theme, always on the move, searching, questioning, however inarticulately, until they arrive at some sort of conclusion. In *The Eclipse* Vittoria starts by renouncing a stable relationship which she feels obscurely to be somehow unsatisfactory to both sides. She then wanders, half purposefully, more often drifting, through the void left by the break-up, until she hitches up tentatively, almost experimentally, with another man. The film ends with the future of the new affair still in suspense, but with the odds heavily against it continuing. Journeys traditionally end with lovers meeting: this one ends on a question mark, with a missed rendezvous. And what the question seems to ask is, "Was it worth it? Was your journey really necessary?"

Abstractly, on the face of it, one can only answer, no. Like the other Antonioni heroines (and they are mostly heroines, not heroes, in Antonioni films), Vittoria has only come up against a wall of incompatibility, non-communication, failure; and beyond the failure, once acknowledged, no further prospect of success. But I cannot help feeling that concretely, as it is given from moment to moment in the

moved to feel, or rather to think, that Vittoria is in fact alienated, that she has an alienated relationship with an alienated world, this is a different matter entirely. But even on this relatively concrete level the word remains a blanket concept, and a wide one, in danger of stifling whatever lies underneath. Throughout the trilogy, and even in the earlier films, there are sequences and shots which reflect a consistent view of the world and of the human situation from which alienation, or some related concept, could be isolated as a key factor. Such, for example, is the Stock Exchange sequence in *The Eclipse*. Vittoria here is seen as an outsider, a looker-in on a world which has a dynamic of its own, which she cannot share in or even understand. Watching the curious spectacle of finance in action she is both alienated from it and conscious of her alienation. But is it Vittoria here who is alienated, or is it not rather the Exchange and the whole financial game itself—alienated in that its players live in a neurotic world in which scraps of paper have taken the place of the solid material values they are supposed to represent? Either way there is a lack of essential rapport. As in the deserted village sequence, there is something about this world that refuses to make sense. Both sequences function artistically by generating an impression of strangeness, lack of connection, and out of the strangeness comes the idea that the world is more than strange: estranged in fact—for which alienated is a synonym.

From the earlier films one might cite Aldo's estrangement from his village environment, best characterised in the final sequence when, as his former comrades run away from the village, away from the refinery, to take part in a protest meeting against the building of an airfield, Aldo himself is shown moving against the stream, back to the village, to Irma and to the refinery, to his death. But on the whole the alienation depicted by Antonioni is psychological rather than social, and takes various forms. At one point in *The Eclipse* Vittoria and Piero mimic the love play, observed, of other couples, and then suddenly the mime turns into an imitation of themselves, a playback of their own recorded experience. This also could be called alienation, but at a different, perhaps deeper level. It suggests that Vittoria at least is no more at home in herself than she is in society, or at any rate that she has what is in context an alarming capacity for standing outside herself. This particular kind of detachment, shared in less degree by the other Monica Vitti characters, by Claudia in *L'Avventura* and Valentina in *La Notte*, indicates in general an exacerbated self-consciousness and an inability to play things straight without turning in on the self to observe and to question. This contrasts sharply with the character of the men in Antonioni films, who have neither the intelligent self-awareness nor the morbidity of the women characters, and therefore fail to understand them when understanding should have been possible. Again the theme is lack of rapport, but here it is not really alienation for all that.

Nor is Antonioni's way of showing his characters as outsiders, non-participants, symptomatic of quite the same thing, though it is related. When Lidia, in *La Notte*, watches the two men fighting on the wasteland in the Milan *periferia*, she is in a position of uncomprehending outsider like that of Vittoria at the Exchange. But what makes the scene powerful is not the banal observation that she and the men are worlds apart, but what happens afterwards. She seems powerless and cut off, as if hypnotised by the performance, unable to intervene, horrified and yet equally unable to move away. Then, suddenly, she shouts out "Stop!" and, incredibly, they do stop. The spell is broken, but the atmosphere remains heavily charged. One of the men gets up and follows Lidia, and one senses between him and the composed, rather frigid, middle-class woman, before she finally turns away and runs, a sort of instinctive animal rapport which is a direct and dramatic reversal of the original situation. Very quickly Lidia reverts, and rejects the scabrous implications of the situation; civilisation gets the better of a dubious instinct, and if a clear



"L'Avventura": Monica Vitti among the bell-ropes.

unfolding of the story, the message of the film is very different. In this perspective what matters is not the result, which remains in any case uncertain, but the journey itself, the search, and the way it is lived out by Vittoria, the heroine. It is Vittoria who is there, in situation; and as I suggested in analysing the village sequence from *L'Avventura*, we are not being asked to respond directly to the situation, but only through our observation of Vittoria, the observer observed. In Antonioni's intention *The Eclipse* is a positive film, and if this comes across in effect it is because Vittoria herself is so positive. She is bright, she is honest, she is ravishingly beautiful, she is unquenchably alive, she is even (shock to the critics) happy, or capable of being so. She is also, sometimes, rather tiresome, but that is by the way. The important thing is that in a situation where at times everything seems to conspire to destroy her and all that she stands for, she survives—at least until the next round. The search will go on, and it will have been worth while.

To say that *The Eclipse* is a film about alienation, therefore, is largely to miss the point. The film is not about alienation, it is about Vittoria. If in the course of the film the spectator is



meaning can be extracted from this episode, it is surely that for better or worse civilised and distinctively human values demand that she should be in a position to reject, and by implication that self-awareness should win through. Alienation, if that is what it is, becomes part of the necessary fabric of civilised life.

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As should be clear from his films, Antonioni's main concern as an artist is with things and with people, with shapes, light and shade, social facts and human thoughts and emotions. He is not concerned, as far as I can see, with any apparatus of concepts and symbols. His films cannot be fitted easily into any pre-cast conceptual mould, and his way of expressing his ideas is generally speaking direct and literal, and does not require symbols or symbolic interpretations to achieve significance. Each action, each visual detail, has its place in a particular plot. The recurrence of some of these details and of certain themes may suggest that they are meant to have a general as well as a particular validity. This is only reasonable: Antonioni is a very consistent and consistently thoughtful director. But it is not possible to isolate details from their immediate context and attribute to them the value of universal symbols.

Contrary to what is often thought, Antonioni has a horror of obvious symbolic correspondences. It did not take him long to realise that his starting point for *L'Eclisse*, the actual solar eclipse, would provide in the finished film only a tedious and unnecessary metaphor—"the eclipse of the sentiments"—for what he really had to say. So he cut it out, and it survives only as an allusion in the title. Speculating here, I should also say that if it had been pointed out to him that the shots of the emptying water butt and the water running to drain in the final sequence of the same film would be taken conceptually as a straightforward symbol of Vittoria and Piero's affair running out, then he would probably have cut them out or altered them so as to minimise, if not eliminate, the association. The meaning of this final sequence, even in the cut version shown in London, is extraordinarily rich and complex, and is diminished rather than enhanced by this sort of interpretation. It depends, like much of the best lyric poetry, on a subtle interplay of subjective and objective, of fact and feeling; but it derives most of its imagery from the narrative structure of the earlier part of the film.

Piero and Vittoria have agreed on a rendezvous, "same place, same time." The camera turns up to keep the appointment, but neither of the protagonists. The rendezvous was for

late afternoon: night falls, and they still don't come. Presumably neither of them will come that evening. There are plenty of reasons why either or both might have failed to come, but none is given. Nor is it certain that this is their last and only chance, that the affair is definitely over. One presumes that it is, but the only convincing reason for believing this is the atmosphere of finality that broods over the scene as afternoon yields to evening, to twilight and then to darkness.

For ten minutes of film the camera offers a montage of mainly fixed-angle shots that record the passage of time in the movements of buses, in the switching on and off during the last hours of daylight of the hoses watering the grass, in the ebbing of the sunlight and lighting-up of the street lamps. The process is utterly impersonal and mechanical. It happens, and every day it happens the same way. As it gets darker, so the people in the streets get fewer, and those that remain seem not to have any human identity. In three successive shots, closing in, we see a man getting off a bus; the newspaper he is reading with a headline about the bomb; and his face, the utterly blank intensity of his eyes distorted by the lenses of his spectacles. Each of these images has a story of its own to tell, but all are subordinated to the main story. We are only here because we are waiting for Piero and Vittoria, who do not come; and the camera only looks in the directions it does because here are the points where Piero and Vittoria have been before, and where we are expecting to see them again. If these locations are dehumanised it is only because the lovers are no longer there to people them; and the sense is not only that they have been caught up in the wheel of time and that their affair has run its course, but also that everything that is sinister in the process of night falling on the city is due to a human failure, in particular to the failure of Piero and Vittoria to keep an appointment.

Yet while both these things are true, or at any rate asserted by the film, there are further overtones which serve to counter-balance the portentous aspects of the scene. Most important, despite the air of finality given to the images, we don't really know that this is the end at all. It may not even be the end for Piero and Vittoria as a couple; it is certainly not the end of the world. As Antonioni himself has put it (I quote from memory), this is an eclipse not the millenium, and "up to now no eclipse has yet been definitive." One should not forget either that a highly selective and elliptical montage such as Antonioni uses in this sequence is one of the most subjective of all cinema techniques. Uniquely in this sequence he is offering a purely lyrical (and for that reason not literal, but not

*Monica Vitti in the opening sequence of "The Eclipse".*





symbolic either) interpretation of the events shown. His camera here is the voice of a lyric poet who draws on real material but fuses it together in a purely imaginative way in order to envisage subjectively a purely imaginative possibility—that the light should have gone out on the love between Piero and Vittoria. The idea of indeterminacy, axiomatic in Antonioni's work, insists that we admit theoretically an alternative possibility, and that further events may yet falsify the picture we have built up of what is happening. At any instant we have only the moment to go on in provisionally interpreting the events, and at this moment it seems to be the end. It feels like the end, and that is what Antonioni is really trying to say.

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This final sequence of *The Eclipse* is unique in Antonioni's work in that it does to a certain limited extent rely on symbols for effect, and in that he does seem for the first time to want to break away from the Flaubertian realism which is his normal vein into a more imaginative and lyrical style. This breakaway is in fact foreshadowed in parts of *La Notte*, in particular in the long, disturbing sequence of Lidia's solitary walk around Milan. But even in *The Eclipse*, except at the end, what I would call the Flaubertian note remains dominant—the note of the painstaking and accurate stylist, the careful investigator of behaviour and environment, the ruthless analyst of sentimental and intellectual failure, the essential realist. Antonioni's realism is not naturalism or *verismo*. It is too finely wrought, pared down too sharply to the essentials of what has to be said. It is also too interior, as much concerned to chart the movements of the mind, however objectively regarded, as it is to observe physical emotions and things. But—and this is why Antonioni, like Flaubert, remains basically a realist—movements below the surface are generally left to be deduced from surface reactions. They are not artificially exteriorised in terms of convenient symbols, as in expressionism, nor are they supposed to inhabit a metaphysical world of their own.

Like the sea bottom, the mind remains part of the natural physical world, but one which does not happen to be visible, and is therefore mysterious. The analogy is imperfect, because it implies a more radical form of determinism than is in fact the case with Antonioni. The apparent indeterminacy of the movements of consciousness is not just the product of our ignorance of the causes; it is real. But its sphere of action is limited, and above all (and this is a basic difference between Antonioni and directors like Bresson, Rossellini and Godard) it implies no spiritual metaphysics. Antonioni's films show him, as near as makes no odds, a resolute materialist.

It is tempting, none the less, to try to discern bits of expressionist symbolism dotted around Antonioni's work, and I admit that if such could be found, they would make things easier for critics. But the temptation must be resisted. Such symbols as can be found are more often figments of the critic's imagination, or at best jetsam of the director's unconscious, than significant elements of the artistic structure. In all Antonioni's films together (except perhaps *Cronaca di un Amore*) the expressionist details could probably be counted on the fingers of one hand, and even those few dismissed as irrelevant. There may be something in the idea that in *Il Grido* the refinery tower is Aldo's positive symbol, while the river is a symbol of Irma and his love for her. Such a symbolism is both sexually and dramatically appropriate (Aldo's failure to break away from dependence on the woman is, as it were, symbolised by his inability to go far from the river, or to leave the valley entirely). But even here, where the symbolism, if such it is, is built into the structure of the film, it is clearly not intended to be expressive as symbolism. If it is important, which it is not, it can only be

because Aldo himself is obscurely aware of what the tower and the river mean *for him*. It is not a bit of expressive shorthand in the style, aimed at underlining heavily what should, after all, be already obvious from the plot.

An Italian critic has remarked, very suggestively, that one of the salient features of Antonioni's style is that it makes no bid to communicate in the mass. It is essentially untheatrical. It does not project itself at an audience, but demands that each individual spectator should involve himself privately with what is going on. There is nothing hectoring or demagogic about it; it calls for intelligent observation, not participation. It is also very much a pictorial style, which communicates through the image and uses the sound track as a complement to the image, and rarely as an independent vehicle for the ideas. As a result it makes rather special demands on the sensibility of the spectator *moyen intellectuel*, who is the only type who normally gets round to seeing the films. Apart from that it is not really a difficult style to come to terms with. Much of what is apparently outrageous is so as the result of being extremely compressed, as if every shot were trying to extract the maximum significance from every detail of the material. The form of observation may seem abnormal, but it is nearly always apposite—suited to the location, the time of day, the state of mind of the characters, the general situation.

When, for example, one has been up all night and is very tired, one's mode of perception (mine at least) is subtly altered; one is more susceptible to resonances in the physical properties of objects than under more normal conditions. It is this feeling that is communicated, very sharply, by the opening sequence of *The Eclipse*, not only in the tense exhaustion of the characters but in the oppressive presence of objects, in the buzzing of an electric fan that grates persistently on an already exposed aural nerve. The effect is both irritating and, to a spectator not yet attuned, unnatural; but perhaps for that very reason, all the more authentic and true.

Where in this oppressive physical and social environment do the characters find any escape? How can they break out of the labyrinth which nature and other men and their own sensibilities have built up around them? Properly speaking there is no escape, nor should there be. Man is doomed to living in the world—this is to say no more than that he is doomed to exist. But the situation is not hopeless. There are moments of happiness in the films, which come, when they come, from being at peace with the physical environment, or with others, not in withdrawing from them. Claudia in *L'Avventura*, on the yacht and then on the island, is cut off, mentally, from the other people there, and gives herself over to undiluted enjoyment of her physical surroundings, until with Anna's disappearance even these surroundings seem to turn against her and aggravate rather than alleviate her pain. In *The Eclipse* Vittoria's happiest moment is during that miraculous scene at Verona when her sudden contentment seems to be distilled out of the simple sights and sounds of the airport: sun, the wind in the grass, the drone of an aeroplane, a juke-box. At such moments other people are only a drag—and yet the need for them exists. The desire to get away from oneself, away from other people, and the satisfaction this gives, arise only from the practical necessity for most of the time of being aware of oneself and of forming casual or durable relationships with other people. And the relationships too can be a source of fulfilment. No single trite or abstract formulation can catch the living essence of Antonioni's version of the human comedy.

*The stills illustrating this article have all been taken from the frame. We would like to thank Mondial Films (L'Avventura) and Gala Film Distributors (The Eclipse) for letting us borrow prints of the films in order to copy the stills.*



# IN THE PICTURE

## The B.F.I. Award

FOR THE SECOND YEAR RUNNING, the British Film Institute's annual award, the Sutherland Trophy, goes to a French filmmaker: to Alain Resnais' *Muriel*, shown during the seventh London Film Festival. The trophy is presented to "the maker of the most original and imaginative film introduced at the National Film Theatre during the year." In its six years of existence, the award has saluted high distinction (Ozu, Antonioni, Satyajit Ray) and also high promise (Olmi for *Il Posto*; Rivette last year for *Paris Nous Appartient*).

The award to *Muriel*, a narrow winner over Godard's *Les Carabiniers*, is accompanied by a special mention for the work of Chris Marker, friend and sometime collaborator of Resnais, whose films were virtually unknown in this country before the N.F.T.'s "Left Bank" season early in 1963. Following this season, in which *Cuba Si!*, *Description of a Struggle* and *Letter from Siberia* were screened, the London Festival brought us up to date on Marker's work with his short *La Jetée* and his feature-length investigation of the mood of a single month in Paris, *Le Joli Mai*.

The Left Bank season brought together the films of Marker, Resnais and Agnès Varda, in the belief, as Richard Roud wrote in *SIGHT AND SOUND*, "that they all have something more in common than their love of cats." They share, as he pointed out, something of a literary turn of mind; and although there is certainly nothing literary about the interview technique of *Le Joli Mai*, there is no doubt that *Muriel* takes Resnais further into the territory of the screen novel than either of his previous features. *Muriel* is reviewed at length elsewhere in this issue: enough to say here that it pursues Resnais' theme of time and memory, and the illusive nature of experience; that its setting is Boulogne in the 1960's, shot in subtly muted colour by Sacha Vierny; and that the whole film is organised, as Penelope Gilliatt has written, "with breathtaking command". *Muriel* is bound to be thought of as a difficult film; it is also perhaps Resnais' most rewarding work. Resnais plans next to film the long-awaited *Adventures of Harry Dickson*, a kind of thriller—or a Resnais kind of thriller. Location-shooting may bring him to England, scene of Harry Dickson's detective adventures.

## What Ever Happened to American Movies?

ROBERT ALDRICH writes: Once upon a time the big cities of the world had theatres which, for the most part, showed American movies. Everybody went to see Yankee films. They made America appear as a paradise where there was plenty of food (and drink), almost as many automobiles as people, buildings which reached into the skies and happy, smiling, healthy children with toys, pets, schools and even their own automobiles. They excited audiences with dreams of good living...

What ever happened to American movies? Well, we still have them. Only a fraction of what we once made. American producers have found that they must appeal to a new audience... a sophisticated and more selective audience. Our producers have come up against unsurmountable barriers in competing with their foreign counterparts—films such as *This Sporting Life*, *8½*, *Tom Jones*, *La Dolce Vita*, *Jules et Jim*.



Robert Aldrich and Dean Martin on location for "Four for Texas".

The simple reason why American producers cannot create such films to compete in world markets is that there is no financing available for them. To protect the high costs of American production, financial sources demand star names. The producers get the stars and then the stars proceed to change the original story concept and scripts. Distributors won't allow a producer to proceed on new, daring productions without star names unless he cross-collateralises with his other films. If he has other films, he risks all economic security and could well go into a debt which would take him a long time to get out of. In other words, the vast majority of producers cannot, and the financial sources will not, take chances, and good, artistic projects fall by the wayside in favour of huge spectacles or pictures designed specifically for certain stars.

Not a single foreign picture recently shown at New York's Lincoln Center could get financing in this country. Give exhibitors ten *David and Lisas* and no one would finance you for an eleventh. The production company which made *Marty* could do so only after cross-collateralising with other films because no one would take a chance. If there were no pictures to cross-collateralise *Marty* with, it might not have been made.

My company (The Associates & Aldrich Co.) will re-invest our profits in making movies. We could get knocked out, but we have faith in ourselves in achieving success. I hope that other companies will also re-invest, but, most of all, I hope that America will take stock of itself and do something about our falling behind in the most important art form in the world, wherein we have relinquished leadership and have even withdrawn from attempting to regain it.

What could happen to American movies? The solutions are drastic and manifold. First, our government should do as most governments throughout the world do and subsidise film productions through tax relief or other means in order to reinstate our films as the world leader in this art form. Second, I believe that many stars, directors and writers would work for



much less to be part of a top artistic effort if they could be assured of gross participations at double negative cost, so that if the picture is successful they can share in the profits proportionately. Third, I feel that the film unions could co-operate by giving special relief to films produced on budgets less than \$300,000. Fourth, pay television would eventually encourage a large number of artistic productions in the \$250,000 to \$500,000 cost range which could successfully compete in world film markets.

### Hong Kong Notes

IAN JARVIE writes: We were sitting in a dingy canteen outside the sound stages. It was near midnight and filming was well under way. I was questioning a pretty starlet of sixteen, who would get to bed only around 6 a.m. after shooting stopped at five, would go to school at 9 a.m. and try to sleep in the afternoon, traffic permitting, before shooting began again at seven next evening. She and her mother spoke only Cantonese. The P.R.O. who was interpreting, with difficulty, was an ex-theatre manager from Singapore, whose first language was English. The film was *The Imperial Woman* (Tzu Hsi) —in Mandarin. The female stars spoke only Mandarin; the male star, Roy Chiao Hung, spoke English fluently and amused me with anecdotes about working with Orson Welles on *Ferry to Hong Kong*, in which he appeared in a black leather jacket as Johnny Sing-Up. The director, Evan Yang, was an ex-journalist from Shanghai who directed the actors in Mandarin, the technicians in Shanghaiese and Cantonese, with 'camera', 'action', and 'cut' interpolated. To me he spoke English.

This is the Hong Kong film scene: confused, vigorous and prospering. We have one of the world's biggest movie industries, producing around 280-300 features per year in less studio space than is available in London. Studios are therefore on a 24-hour, three-shift system. The actors and directors work on anything up to three films simultaneously, as set-building and studio schedules allow. Production costs are low: HK \$1,000,000 (£60,000) is a big budget. Directors and stars may make between three and twelve pictures a year, and as a consequence quality suffers. The studio equipment is serviceable, the personnel efficient. The trouble is the assumption by producers that what their hungry audience wants is always the same again. There is thus an appalling carelessness about script-structure. An average treatment will fetch about £150; no wonder they look as though they were turned out in a weekend.

Yet there are hopeful signs. Mandarin pictures are booming, out-grossing foreign films in Chinese areas; and Mandarin movies are the most expensive, have the best directors and writers and the most famous stars. They combine good returns with prestige. The major markets are Taiwan, Malaysia, Korea, Japan, Thailand, and now Hong Kong itself. Motion Picture and General Investment (Cathay) and Shaw Brothers, the two big companies, produce some fifty Mandarin films annually between them. Mostly in colour and 'scope, these pictures already have such an international appeal in S.E. Asia that greedy eyes are turning to those untapped markets in Europe and the United States. To this end efforts are being made to meet Western standards and ideas.

The producers are groping, of course, and I am not prepared to gamble on whether they won't mistake initial success due to curiosity-value for genuine appreciation and get themselves caught out. However, films are improving, with the occasional throwback. Japanese co-productions and advisors are fashionable. Outsiders are watched closely. Richard Quine was here (his location work for *Suzie Wong* could teach the locals much) and countless others (*Hong Kong Hot Harbour*, *Farewell to Hong Kong*, *Hong Kong Inconnu*, *Crazy Cats in Hong Kong*, etc.). Robert Wise came scouting locations for *The Sand Pebbles*; Richard Brooks is said to be coming for *Lord Jim*; Stephen Bosustow has set up shop here and is now getting into production with animated commercials, semi-animated instructionals and the like. This sort of activity has its influence, although the Chinese, unlike the Japanese, are not good at imitating.

Far and away the most popular Hong Kong director is Li Han Hsing, whose *Yang Kwei Fei* was shown at Cannes in 1962. Since then Li has done *Madame White Snake*, an opera film and a vehicle for the chocolate-box charms of the biggest local star, Lin Dai. But last year at Cannes Li had *Empress Wu* (shown as *The Diabolical Queen*), very much a follow up to *Yang Kwei Fei*. Empress Wu was the first woman to rule China, rising from concubine, to empress to a weak emperor, and eventually staying on in power after her

husband's death because of her outstanding administrative talent. She survived anti-woman prejudice, revolts, and criticism of her many lovers, to die peacefully at a ripe old age. It is a rich story, far too rich for one film, and a wonderful part.

Li's method is to select key scenes and string them together, relying purely on the development of the Empress's character to give any drama to the overall structure. His personality as a director is rather buried among all the historical trappings, but clearly he has ideas, knows how to execute them (as in the throne room sequence in which the Empress confronts her rebellious son), and shows a certain command of the medium. He has many pupils and has recently left the Shaw organisation to set up an independent company under the MP and GI. This could mean either increasing caution in order to ensure financial success, or increased freedom to get out of the traditional historical-picture rut.

Chinese movies have grown out of Chinese theatre, unlike Japanese movies, which (according to Donald Richie) were never imprisoned there. Players in particular are recruited from the stage because many of the roles they are called on to play involve knowledge of theatrical gestures and styles. Happily, though, the directors and writers are not from the theatre and are eager and willing to grasp at what the outside world can teach them. But they do not find encouragement in the definite conservatism and lack of sophistication of the audience, nor in the Chinese theatrical tradition, where originality and innovation are virtually unknown. In a way progress will mean Westernisation, simplification of conventions, greater attention to scripts, and so on; but in another way, of course, it could be regarded as universalisation.

### The Threepenny Opera

DAVID SCHOENBAUM writes: Without suggesting any logical connection: as good a thing as it is politically that "*Bonn ist nicht Weimar*," the consequences for the West German film industry have been unfortunate. The currency reform of 1948 nipped the bud of promise of the first post-war years, leaving only the endless whimper of producers, directors and audiences alike. "Every time I see a flash of inspiration in a film," Sigismund von Radecki wrote recently in Munich's *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, "I say to myself 'that would never occur to a German director.'" The only hint of inspiration to strike the West German film industry lately is to beg Bonn for subsidies."

Although Wolfgang Staudte's new production of Brecht and Weill's *The Threepenny Opera* tells us nothing new about the West German film situation, it rubs in the known facts so deep and so hard that it commands attention by its sheer honesty. By a coincidence Brecht himself might have enjoyed, the film's premiere occurred simultaneously with the publication of the Bonn government's economic report. While Professor (now Chancellor) Erhard warned against the dangers of creeping inflation, filmgoers need go no further than Munich's Gloria-Palast to see them on the screen.

Heralded on opening night by the principals in mink and a corps



Audrey Hepburn in Stanley Donen's new comedy-thriller, "Charade".



of young men in Metropolitan Police uniform, four million D-marks' worth of gorgeousness rolled across the screen, 400,000 of them (10 per cent of the budget) invested in the screen rights alone. Brecht's widow, Helene Weigel, was reported to have insisted on loyalty to the original as a condition of sale. What she might have thought as the opening credits crashed through a portentous surge of singing strings was not reported. But that the singing strings would be answered by the indignant shouts of angry critics was easy enough to foresee. "Mack the Knife is not his old self," the *Süddeutsche* declared the next day, something of an understatement in the circumstances. Though, in fact, the book was closer to the original than was G. W. Pabst's in the first film version, the style, atmosphere and milieu were as far from *The Threepenny Opera* of 1928-31 as is the Berlin of Christopher Isherwood from the Berlin of Willy Brandt.

As though determined to symbolise the distance, Kurt Ulrich, the producer, even engaged an American (Sammy Davis, Jr.), an Englishwoman (June Ritchie) and a Frenchman (Lino Ventura) to supplement Curd Jürgens and Hildegard Knef in the leading parts. The sound track was recorded in three languages. Not surprisingly, the end product, with every edge filed down, had the smooth and undifferentiated internationalism of a Hilton hotel. As social criticism, it was about as dangerous as *The Mikado*. And it was a kind of tribute to Ulrich and Staudte that their *Threepenny Opera*, with the grandiose cynicism of its book virtually unchanged, was none the less passed by local authorities for audiences over twelve; that in the land of Franz-Josef Strauss, where a lady Christian Democrat was chastised not long ago for reciting a Brecht poem at a party meeting, not a single party stalwart even considered a letter to the newspapers.

A neat if apologetic little synopsis appeared in the programme notes. "As Bert Brecht and Kurt Weill wrote their *Threepenny Opera* in 1928, they intended it to be a cutting attack on the corrupt morality of contemporary bourgeois society. . . . Today the situation is different. The social protest lacks the justification it had in 'those years'. Therefore the whole conception of *The Threepenny Opera* from the standpoint of book, direction and milieu is different." To what extent this difference was planned, to what extent it was not, remains hard to judge. *The Marriage of Figaro* for fifth-formers, Cocteau in the Académie, *The Threepenny Opera* for 12-year-olds: this is what happens to revolutionaries, and neither Staudte nor anyone else can be accused of complicity.

But unclarity is something else. In a still ruined Berlin, Staudte made *The Murderers are Amongst Us* and *Der Untertan*, good and serious films aimed directly at the guilt, servility, Babbitry and corruption of his fellow-countrymen. *Roses for the Prosecutor*, one of the few recent German films to be shown in Britain, aimed at the same target. Could *The Threepenny Opera* have been meant to do the same? The Weimar classic, a parody of operetta and *Spiessbürger-tum*, rescored in Federal Republic super-extravaganza: this could be updating with a vengeance and an awesome double-parody. But if this *Threepenny Opera* was meant to be Staudte's joke on the Federal Republic, the joke was, in fact, on him. The critics accused him of missing the point. The audience didn't seem to know there was one.

### Italian Notes

GIULIO CESARE CASTELLO writes: As yet this season the Italian cinema has had few big cards to play, and most of the major box-office returns have gone to American productions (or Anglo-American, as with *Lawrence of Arabia*). Of the home product, audiences have favoured the movies with popular stars—Gassman in *Il Successo*, a vulgarised repeat of *Il Sorpasso*; Alberto Sordi in De Sica's *Il Boom*—over such films as the Venice prize-winner *Le Mani sulla Città*. Mario Monicelli's *I Compagni* has just opened at the time of writing, to coincide with the Socialist Party Congress. It re-creates one of the first strikes in Italy (at Turin, about 1890) with a mixture of pathos and humour, and a final shift into tragedy, reminiscent of Monicelli's *La Grande Guerra*. The method is arguable; the results are both spectacular and remarkable.

Films completed or in production include Germi's *Sedotta e Abbandonata* (*Seduced and Abandoned*), again in the manner of *Divorzio all'Italiana*; De Sica's three-episode *Ieri, Oggi, Domani*, which signals the end of his twenty-year collaboration with Zavattini; and two Moravia adaptations—Damiani's *La Noia*, whose cast includes Bette Davis, and Maselli's *Gli Indifferenti*, with Claudia Cardinale. Mauro Bolognini has had to put off his projected *Casanova*, for which he originally had American backing, since the image of the great lover in his screenplay contrasted too much with popular legend; he is now filming *La Corruzione* (*Corruption*). Rossellini, who seems to have abandoned feature films, is making



Peter Finch, Anne Bancroft and James Mason in Jack Clayton's "The Pumpkin Eater", from the Penelope Mortimer novel.

a long documentary on iron. Antonioni is at last starting work on his long-delayed *Il Deserto Rosso*, in colour. Fellini has announced his next project, also in colour: a vehicle for Giulietta Masina in which the fantasy element which so attracts him will play a large part. Pasolini is still looking for an actor to play the part of Christ in his *Vangelo secondo San Matteo* (*The Gospel According to St. Matthew*). It appears that this will not be a non-professional, as was first reported, but an American actor, possibly Montgomery Clift. One comes, inevitably, to *The Bible*. One by one, the big name directors (Visconti, Bresson, Welles) have dropped out, after spending months of preparatory work on their sections. It looks, from the latest reports, as though John Huston will be going it alone.

### Risk in Art

EXTRACT FROM A SPEECH by André Malraux, Minister of Cultural Affairs, to the Assemblée Nationale on November 9, 1963:

"It is claimed that such and such a film by Resnais—I must not cite titles from the tribune, but you know very well to which I refer—ought not to represent France at the Festivals. The two Resnais films which have been sent, however, have both earned top prizes. They have not earned top money. That may well be: but what concern is that of ours? (*Applause*)

We are here to see that the film industry as a whole earns money. Measures which would bankrupt the industry in order to produce masterpieces might be desirable from an artistic point of view, but would be absurd from a Governmental standpoint. But, even if the cinema must earn money, it is not essential that every film should do so. It may be necessary that French painters should be protected from poverty, but the fact that Cézanne was not rich has obviously very little importance in the history of French painting.

We must recognise, therefore, the need to show films which we know to be seminal. They may flower of their own accord: for at least let us have films which will last, and which will become the films of the future. This has happened in two or three cases: bravo! Or they may not last, but by maintaining a certain level in the French cinema, they will ensure that the next entertainment film to be made will at least be a film of some quality; and in this way we shall have accomplished our task just the same.

That is why I ask you to believe that you must accept a certain risk in the choice of films—that risk which lies in any choice concerning art. . . ."

Not much wonder that, give or take a few, French films are so much more influential creatively than our own. There's room, up there at the top.



**FRANJU'S**

# JUDEx



Judex, masked avenger of Feuillade's silent serial, rides again in Franju's new film. Channing Pollock, the American prestidigitator, heads the cast. The masked lady above is Francine Bergé, who played one of the two maids in "Les Abysses". Script is by Francis Lacassin, who is engaged on a biography of Feuillade.







# WHOSE CRISIS?

Penelope  
Houston

**"The crisis that everyone feared is now upon us," wrote SIGHT AND SOUND's Italian correspondent six months ago. "The French cinema is currently going through the most serious crisis in its history," said our Paris correspondent three months later. "An All Industry Committee should be set up to explore ways and means of saving the British industry from 'a shattering crisis'," reported a British trade paper at the end of October. To a sizeable extent, our crisis is their crisis: a still declining audience; over-production; too many films which no longer bring audiences into the cinemas; a lack of confidence in investment circles, with the result that projects are dropped or shelved because they cannot find backers; more cinema shutdowns; smaller audiences . . . It is a situation easy to sum up, difficult to analyse in detail because of all the imponderables involved, and almost impossible to prescribe for, other than in the facile language of the patent medicine slogan.**

ONCE A PROBLEM HAS been given an airing on *Panorama*, official crisis status is almost automatically assured; and at the end of October last year Sir Michael Balcon (independent producer, head of Bryanston), Mr. David Kingsley (managing director of British Lion) and Mr. Kenneth Winckles (managing director of Rank Theatre Division) duly lined up for interrogation by Richard Dimbleby. The little local difficulties of the film business no longer looked quite so local; crisis talk was in the air. As usual, the cinema trade papers appeared not very happy about the publicity. "If there's a call to panic stations, more harm than good can emerge from washing the linen in public," commented *The Cinema*, suggesting a nice line in mixed metaphors. The TV discussion, according to a trade executive quoted in *The Cinema*, "should have managed to drive an up-beat view of the industry to round off the argument." If all the cinemas and film studios in Britain were to shut down tomorrow, one feels that sections of the industry would still look for, and no doubt contrive to find, the 'up-beat view'. Significantly, one of the crisis demands has been for a sort of all-industry PRO, presumably with the idea that the 'image' could stand a little polishing up. As things stand, at any rate, any journalist who tries to investigate what 'crisis' really means, and to ask industry spokesmen for fact as opposed to theory, may feel that he is trying to penetrate the mysteries of one of the more secretive medieval guilds.

The elementary facts of the situation, however, are scarcely in dispute. Without a circuit release, through the Rank Organisation or Associated British, no first feature made in this country, and budgeted at normal costs, stands any real hope of getting its money back. The two circuits between them can take only 104 first features a year (making no allowance for double bills); and although a circuit release offers no guarantee that a film will actually make money (far from it), it represents to the producer his only substantial hope of

continuing in business. Why this should be so would involve delving into an immense amount of past history, including the gradual decline of the third release (see last SIGHT AND SOUND). "Monopoly," cry the independents, emphasising that Rank and ABC between them control 41.5 per cent of cinema seats in Britain. To stand the sum on its head, by pointing out that 58 per cent of cinema seats are *not* under Rank and ABC control, is of no real help, because the power of the circuits has to do with the location as well as the number of their cinemas. The words "circuit release" must be painfully engraved on the heart of every British distributor.

With 104 first feature dates to allocate, how do the two major circuits apportion their general release time? Very reasonably, it would seem. During the first 50 weeks of 1963, Rank screened 23 British first features, 10 of them being the company's own releases, and 27 foreign films. ABC, during the same period, showed 26 British first features, 14 of them from their own distribution company, Warner-Pathé, and 24 from foreign sources. The weekly release pattern, in other words, operated at a rate of virtually 50 per cent British product, against a basic quota obligation of 30 per cent.

To the independents, however, this percentage seems scarcely high enough, at least in the present circumstances. The complaint is of a queue of films kept waiting anything up to a year for a circuit screening, with the gloomiest consequences for everyone concerned. The film may begin to look dated before it reaches the screen; a director or actor, counting on some helpful publicity, may find his career temporarily halted. These are hypothetical hard luck stories. More definite, and indeed inevitable, is the steady piling up of interest charges which have to be met by the producer. One of the concealed items in the budget of every film, in the sense that it remains totally invisible on the screen, is the amount of cash spent on raising the cash that will actually make the movie.



A year's delay could bring an additional bill of the order of £6,000 on a £100,000 investment. And while money is tied up in one unreleased film, investors are unlikely to want to put further cash into another production which may in its turn be slated for its year on the shelf.

Such are the problems for the independent. At least four of the biggest money-makers to have come out of British studios during the past year have been independent productions; and no one is suggesting that *From Russia with Love* and *Tom Jones*, *Heavens Above* and *The L-Shaped Room*, were received with anything less than open arms by the circuits. No one, on either side, is arguing about a prejudice against independents as such. But the whole disputed situation would become substantially clearer if the distributors concerned could disclose exactly what films they are talking about, and the circumstances of their making. The industry smoke screen has been decisively lifted on one title: Sidney Furie's *The Leather Boys*, produced by Raymond Stross, completed in March 1963 and due for its release in March 1964, and by all accounts a successful follow-up to Furie's *The Boys*. We also know about *Ladies Who Do* (British Lion; a comedy about charwomen), finished last summer and also due for release about March. And one can come up with such further titles as Eyeline Films' *Lunch Hour* (Shirley Ann Field and Robert Stephens in a version of the John Mortimer play), *Hide and Seek*, a comedy directed by C. Raker Enfield and starring Ian Carmichael, *Two Left Feet* (Roy Baker), another comedy from British Lion, and *A Place to Go*, the Relph-Dearden film starring Rita Tushingham and Mike Sarne.

There must be more hold-ups than these: Mr. Kingsley claims ten pictures from his company alone. But the film industry would rather discuss delays in general than name names, "for fear of prejudicing future negotiations". A film known to be on the waiting list, if it has not already secured its good conduct badge in the form of a circuit release, is liable to be regarded as a slightly suspect commodity. And although we are told that independent production in Britain is threatened with a near shut-down, that workmen are being declared redundant and studios in imminent danger of closing, that even British Lion's enormous Shepperton studio has no commitments for the new year, and that projects are being shelved and directors sent packing, there is again no very tangible information about precisely what projects have been held up, or what film-makers are idle.

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In the absence of those hard facts which the industry likes to clutch to its bosom, it would be easy to assume that there may be rather more talk than crisis. Easy, but also unfair. In effect, the British industry would seem to be confronted with a limited short-term problem, represented by that queue of films lined up on the manufacturers' shelves, which could all too easily set up a chain reaction of long-term consequences. If a studio closes its doors, we have learnt from all previous experience that it is unlikely ever to reopen them. If investors lose confidence, it takes them a long time to get it back again. If there is a general sense of foreboding and despondency in the air, it has all of a London fog's ability to spread itself. It ought to be easier for the big companies to take chances, precisely because their productions have a clearer road to a circuit release; yet it has been left to the beleaguered independents to take most of the risks. A clamp-down on creative initiative, while flat little programme pictures continue to get made and to lose money, could be one of the worst results of the present situation.

There is no problem about how the situation has arisen, although one finds the usual paradoxes that bedevil any film industry discussion. A queue of films lines up unseen, and reissues of Garbo and Capra, Hawks and Bette Davis, occupy the West End cinemas. Exhibitors complain that there are too few films, while distributors are insisting that there are too few outlets. "The catch in it," said Mr. Winckles in the course of



Colin Campbell in "The Leather Boys".

the *Panorama* discussion, "is the quality of the films. Merely putting the film on the screen at a theatre does not make the public come." Mr. Goodlatte, of ABC, put it even more firmly: to force exhibitors to play "more indifferent British films" could "only reduce box-office takings . . . Numbers alone are no guarantee to producers of a healthy industry." But, argued Mr. Kingsley, "In September they (the Rank Organisation) showed two American films which were well known in advance to be not up to the standards of many of the British films standing by awaiting release." A look at the release list suggests that Mr. Kingsley must have been talking about *A Gathering of Eagles* and *The Ugly American*. They did, at least, offer Rock Hudson and Brando.

As far as a solution is concerned, the ideas are mainly familiar. The Federation of Film Unions has revived the old stalking-horse of the third release, to be "equal in booking and revenue power to Rank and ABC." Where, however, are these cinemas to come from? A meeting organised by the Federation



of British Film Makers, representing most of the independents, came down strongly on the side of a 50 per cent quota, as against 1963's 30 per cent. But this, Mr. Kingsley suggested to me, would be rather in the nature of a safeguard, and in its way an incentive, than a complete solution in itself. The crisis, after all, has arisen at a time when the circuits are not far from meeting voluntarily a quota the independents would like to see legally enforced. I have heard dark suggestions that the circuits reserve the "good" months (November, for some reason, is regarded as one of these) for their own product, and award independents too many of the inferior dates. There has been some radical talk of American-style "divorcement", splitting off production interests from cinema ownership, although this is something which could only be achieved by legislation and would presumably depend on a Labour Government's view of the industry. Meanwhile a Commons debate has been asked for (and may indeed have taken place by the time this article appears in print), the matters involved being principally the Quota Act and the position of the NFFC, which many people in the industry would like to see strengthened, and which is at present "starved of capital" (to quote the ACTT), "partly because of the hold-ups in release of films." Finally, on top of all this, there is a basic resentment of "monopoly power" as such, evident at many points in the submissions to the Cinematograph Film Council's sub-committee, whose report was discussed in the October SIGHT AND SOUND.

Assuming, as one probably can, that any film of strong commercial potential will get a circuit release with no trouble whatsoever, have the others a moral right to a quick outlet—or, indeed, to any outlet at all? This would seem to be the crux of the problem. We can't prejudge the quality of films so far unseen, and the box-office returns of these held-up films, when they finally reach the circuits, will be watched with interest. If they should turn out to be thumping successes, the independents will have proved a point. If not . . . Well, Rank and ABC have enough doubtful commercial propositions from their own stables, and one could hardly blame them for stepping warily. Or, rather, one would *only* blame them if it could be effectively shown that they were jeopardising the long-term interests of the industry. Obviously a situation in which the independents are, in effect, thrown into such a

state of dependence on the two main cinema chains is not a happy one; but there is also the hard economic problem, of how many cinemas (and to some extent therefore how many films) the box-office can now support.

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The problem would seem to begin a good deal further back: not with the difficulty of getting films into the cinemas, but with the question of the kind of films that are being produced in British studios. Again and again, British producers, independents and others alike, come up with entertainment movies barely more ambitious in conception, execution and casting than the sort of thing their audiences are watching every night on television. One is not talking here about art but about business; about the kind of creative thinking, or breakdown of creative thinking, which results in one more lacklustre thriller, one more enfeebled comedy, one more jumped-up B picture. No one, by definition, actually sets out to make a dull movie; but there is a kind of creeping dullness which no Western cinema can now afford.

Once the pipeline has been unjammed, British production is likely to settle down, in the euphemistic phrase, "at a rather lower level": in other words, there will be somewhat fewer pictures. It is the question of what kind of pictures these are likely to be which ought, one feels, to be engaging our producers' attention even in their time of crisis. Is there a British company which could announce a long term production policy, indicating what it means to do with its money when it gets it? Why is there such a persistent note of defensiveness in all industry debates, with the same little group of highly successful productions (*Tom Jones*, etc.) being cited over and over again, as though in a hope that they might serve as talismans against the dark nights ahead?

The Canadian-born Harry Saltzman and the American-born Albert Broccoli have just dealt the industry the most timely of object lessons with *From Russia with Love*, the most dazzling example of the producer's craft to have come out of a British studio in longer than one cares to remember. The film was by no means cheap to make. (*The Observer* has quoted a production cost of £625,000: Eon Productions assure me that this is not an accurate estimate, but cling to the proud mysteries of their calling by refusing to substitute a figure closer to the mark.) But the art of showmanship is in part the knack of knowing how to spend money intelligently, how to make the expenditure look good on the screen. It is in these terms that *From Russia with Love* scores so formidably over its rivals. The opening sequence, of the night stalking-match around the formal gardens of a *Marienbad* chateau, is a case in point: very little to do with the main plot, liable to be written off as 'extravagant' by the cost-accountant mind, but a sequence conceived entirely in terms of audience impact, and executed with the debonair flourish of the whipped cream piped around the top of the pudding.

Commercial intelligence, one supposes, could be defined as an assessment of what you spend in terms of what you are likely to get back. It was intelligent to spend plenty on *From Russia with Love*, and equally intelligent to spend very little on *The Caretaker*, recognising in advance that one has here an art-house property with a limited but, it is to be hoped, accessible world market. These represent the two extremes of British film-making in recent months. *From Russia with Love* cannot stand too many imitations, though no doubt it will have to put up with them. It comes simply as a reminder that if you want a certain type of film to look distinctive, the effect cannot be achieved by making it appear that a man and a boy have filmed it for a few pounds in an empty allotment. *The Caretaker*, on its very different terms, represents a labour of love, and to that extent is closer to the continental than the British tradition. The London Festival has yielded reminders

(Continued on page 50)



"From Russia with Love": Lotte Lenya tours the Spectre base.



# C L FILM P S



EVERYONE KNOWS WHICH ARE the ordinary box-office champions of the Odeons and A.B.C.s: they go, after all, to enough trouble to tell us and there is a machinery for disseminating the information at the end of the year. But which are the big successes among the continental films shown over here? Unless they get on to the circuits they are unlikely ever to reach takes of such proportions that they get into the lists of the year's most generally lucrative films. I have been doing a bit of investigation among London cinemas and continental distributors, and the results are interesting, if sometimes a trifle surprising.

The first thing one notices is that even in this far more specialised world, where one would imagine there was a reasonably coherent and consistent audience, there still seems to be no such thing as a guaranteed box-office draw. One or two stars, for instance, do have some of the same sort of appeal as Hollywood stars, but that is not now saying much. In general it is not simply the star that draws, but the star in the film. And even the combination of two of the hottest continental favourites, Brigitte Bardot and Marcello Mastroianni, could not make *Vie Privée* into a West End success (one wonders how it would have done, though, had it been at a recognised continental-type cinema instead of the Ritz); even though, paradoxically, as a result of getting some circuit showing, its final returns over the whole country should compare favourably with many of the continental films which were most successful in art-houses only.

If stars, with such rare exceptions as Bardot and Mastroianni (Moreau seems to be another), count for relatively little in the eyes of the art-house audience, one might suppose that their place was taken by directors. But even here there is no real consistency. Take Bergman, for instance: the Academy persevered with him in the face of complete apathy on the part of the public and critics towards *Sawdust and Tinsel* and not much better audiences, despite a number of favourable notices, for *Smiles of a Summer Night*. They really hit the jackpot with *Wild Strawberries*, one of their greatest successes ever—a success by no means repeated with *The Face* and *So Close to*



Dahlia Lavi as the possessed heroine of "Il Demonio".

*Life*. Others were luckier: the Curzon hit on the big success which virtually ended the Bergman vogue, *The Virgin Spring*, while the Paris-Pullman's season, coming right in the middle of the Bergman fever, coined money with a number of films which were not, on reflection, among Bergman's best or even particularly good in themselves. As for Bergman's more recent films, which have mostly fallen to Gala, it is noticeable that none of them figures among Gala's big successes, though perhaps, to judge by advance reports of sex and censorability, this state of affairs may be rectified by *The Silence*.

A lot of the films which come high in the list of continental successes are fairly obvious, for one reason or another. Films that have been given a circuit showing, like *Le Salaire de la Peur*, *La Dolce Vita*, *Le Repos du Guerrier* and *Two Women*; films which have run for such phenomenal lengths of time in the West End that one could hardly fail to be aware of the fact, like *Orfeu Negro*, *The Eclipse*, *L'Année Dernière à Marienbad*, *Hiroshima mon Amour*, *Jules et Jim* and *Viridiana*; a handful of sensation pieces like (to select at random from Gala's list) *Mondo Cane*, *Women of the World*, *Juvenile Passion*, *The Sins of Youth*, *Call Girls of Rome*, *After School*. But who would have thought, for instance, that *Day of Wrath* would still stand as one of the Academy's biggest successes ever, along with *Paisa*, *Casque d'Or* and the inevitable Shakespeare season? (Olivier in Shakespeare only, though; attempts to import other things, like the Reinhardt *Midsummer Night's Dream*, have had no luck.) The Paris-Pullman has its "trade-mark" and its own special audience, and one is not surprised to learn that such obvious Paris-Pullman films as *Snobs* and *Zazie dans le Métro* have done very well, or for that matter *L'Avventura*; but *Si Versailles m'était Conté?* or *Huis Clos?* or *Bel-Ami?* In the case of *Bel-Ami* the manager proffers the explanation that the advertising was based on the *Daily Telegraph's* description of the film as "a guided tour through a mink-lined sewer," adding ruefully, "That was in the early days, of course; we would never use such a line now."

\* \* \*

BRUNELLO RONTI ONCE WROTE the best book there is on Italian neo-realism. More recently he has been Fellini's constant assistant and script collaborator. He had already collaborated on the direction of one film on his own account, but *Il Demonio*, shown at the London Film Festival, is his first independent effort as writer-director. And a very improbable work it is to emerge from such a background. "Fellini saw it and said he could not recognise himself in it at all," says Ronti happily, and it is doubtful whether many of his neo-realist forebears would recognise themselves either. For the film is much more suggestive of the world (though not the style) of



Bergman and particularly of Carl Dreyer, Rondi's principal devotion.

And yet there is after all quite a lot of neo-realism in the film and in Rondi's mental make-up. "The trouble with realism in general, and Italian neo-realism in particular," he says, "is that it has become so stiffly formularised as not only a way of looking at things, but a prejudgment of what sort of things should be looked at. For instance, it very early became a social judgment: working-class people and backgrounds were 'realistic', middle-class weren't. But, more important, realism came to involve closing one's eyes to anything which did not fit in with a very naive, out-dated nineteenth-century rationalist-materialistic view of life and human psychology. For me *Il Demonio* is a realistic film because in it I have tried to observe real people in real situations and respect the conclusions which they forced on me: after examining the life of these people and all the evidences I could find of their witch-beliefs, I think the only interpretation that takes account of everything is that there is something there which cannot be explained away rationally. I believe that this secret, hidden side of reality exists, and that it is only 'realistic' to take account of it. It does not seem to me realistic to approach reality with a set of cut-and-dried principles about what is and what is not possible, and then ignore anything which does not fit in with them.

"Particularly, I think, is this an anachronistic attitude now. Everything in life today seems to suggest that we are in the middle of a revolt against reason: the signs are all over, from the career of Hitler to the dramatic ideas of Artaud. And I think the most truly modern films, the most truly realistic if you like, are those which honestly reflect this. For instance, I was very disappointed with *Le Mani sulla Città* just because it presents everything as clear and explicable; it assumes that man can, in theory at least, regulate everything. But *Salvatore Giuliano* is something very different: it accepts the mystery at the centre of life, it shows even in its form that the whole truth is of its essence unknowable."

While I was talking to Signor Rondi, I naturally could not lose the opportunity of asking some questions about Fellini's recent films. For instance was it true that Fellini's episode of *Boccaccio '70* had originally run an hour and a half? And if so, what on earth was it like? "Yes, it did, but it was not any more successful in its fuller version. At least, it was wonderful up to the moment when Anita comes down from the hoarding, but then there is the problem of what to do with her, and I don't think Federico ever solved it. Really, that film was significant chiefly as a sort of laboratory in which Federico could try out things which led to interesting consequences later. The style of playing, for instance; the very broad caricature comes off only in parts of the *Boccaccio* episode, but after trying it out there Federico was able to do it with perfect justice and finesse in *8½*, particularly with the Sandra Milo part. And the experiment with colour: I think you will see how that has paid off in the new film Federico is preparing now with his wife . . ."

And how about the two endings of *8½*? Did he think Fellini had made the right decision on which to use? "Absolutely not! We brooded for a long time about it, Pinelli being very strong for the circus ending, and I for the other. To my mind the circus ending is too much of a showman's trick, while the other, the more realistic ending in which Guido and his wife sit in the restaurant car on the train going home and Guido sees all the characters of the film in the car, in a dream all set off by the rhythm of the wheels, that was really gentle and poetic. After all, simply making up one's mind to make the best of a bad job, to go on living somehow and try to make sense of the warring elements in one's own personality, can never be a very dramatic ending to a story of an emotional

crisis, even if it is the truest. I think Federico would have done better to accept that and allow the film's ending to be true to its material. Still, once Federico makes up his own mind about what he thinks is right, nothing can shake him, and I think that's the only way for a great artist to be. No great film was ever yet made by a committee . . ."

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ENTIRELY BY ACCIDENT, I managed recently to encounter both Vincent Price and Roger Corman for the first time on the same day. They were here, more or less, to make *The Masque of the Red Death*, but only, as far as I could make out, because London happened to be a convenient crossing point of their two independent and eventful paths: Corman on his way back to America after shooting *The Dubious Patriots* in Yugoslavia, taking in the London première of his cherished race-relations drama *The Stranger* (ex *The Intruder*), and Price making London a convenient centre for his forays on behalf of his own famous art collection and his current art-buying spree for Sears Roebuck, whose peripatetic art-for-sale shows have, under his enterprising guidance, been turning thousands of unlikely people into collectors all over the States for the last year.

They offer a curious contrast, the two men, except in one particular: their superficial improbability as leading purveyors of cinematic horror and their cheering refusal to be apologetic about what they do. Both are highly educated (Corman with a degree in industrial engineering from Stanford and research at Oxford; Price with an academic career which took in Yale, Nuremberg University and the Courtauld Institute of Art, London), and both clearly what Corman calls himself, "a compulsive film-maker." Corman, admittedly, has aspirations to make films about "serious" subjects, though happily, if *The Stranger* is anything to go by, the mere fact of tackling subjects like explosive race-relations in the Deep South is not going to prevent him from making brisk, quick-witted entertainment films out of them. Price, on the other hand, seems entirely happy with what he is doing now: presumably the more highbrow side of his artistic aspirations is taken care of by his work as an art expert, from which horror films make an agreeable and not unprofitable break.

He is, in fact—and with good reason—distrustful of Hollywood's "art". "If you're really interested in the opinion of posterity and all that, you have to face the fact that most of what we now revere as art was conceived originally as everyday work designed to meet some specific need of the moment for a patron or the public. In the cinema you only have to look at the American silent film now to see that at this distance of time it is the entertainment film which still lives as art, while the big art films of the period have mostly fallen by the



"Boccaccio '70": Anita Ekberg after her descent from the hoarding.  
"The problem is what to do with her . . ."



wayside; and I think it's almost certain that the same will happen with films now. I remember when we were making *The Fly* at Fox a few years ago, George Stevens was filming *The Diary of Anne Frank* on the next stage, and literally in the time it took him to perfect and shoot one short scene we had shot our whole picture. Now I don't say that *The Fly* is a great picture, or anything like that, but it was made to entertain a particular public and it did: it cost about 350,000 dollars and made 3½ million. *Anne Frank*, on the other hand, cost 3½ million and lost a million and a half."

Corman would certainly agree: an entertainment man to the tips of his fingers, he delights in the horror film just because it allows him considerable freedom to experiment with film form without being considered arty and remote from the realities of the commercial cinema. What, after all, is closer to reality than a fifteen-day shooting schedule (which has been the average for the Poe series, though on *The Raven* "we decided to be self-indulgent because of all the process work, and allowed ourselves sixteen days")? Well, I suppose there are things which are even more real and earnest, like Corman's record three-day schedule on *The Terror*, a Boris Karloff vehicle, which came to him as an idea while he was making *The Raven*, was sketched out as a script overnight and shot on a standing set in two days, with a further day on location shortly after. Corman feels himself that this is going a little far ("The year I made ten films I said to myself never again," he says, with a glint in his eye which suggests that it may well happen again any moment now). "With a film like *The Little Shop of Horrors* you can do it because it is mainly comedy which is played right off the top, and you can shoot it all with high-key lighting and two cameras turning, television style; but with a straight horror film like *The Terror* you need atmosphere, and that really takes time and money to set up."

Mention of comedy inevitably brought us on to the increasing role of comedy in the later Poe films. Corman talked with particular enthusiasm of the delights of working with Vincent Price, Boris Karloff and Peter Lorre: "They all have this great quality of giving you all you can ask for and more. With so many actors you have to keep working on them to get them to give enough, to come out with the really big effect. But with them they will let you have the lot at once, and then if necessary you can scale it down. And of course they all have highly developed senses of humour, so that they can play on the edge of farce without ever going over unless they really mean to: which is very important in anything so close to farce as a horror film." Apparently by now the various members of the Corman horror stable work so well and easily together that much of the film is improvised as they go along—on several occasions they have even started without a script and kept the scriptwriter panting along behind. In *The Raven*, for instance, many of the best bags were worked out on the set: Vincent Price recalls how they were brooding on the best way to establish in the audience's mind that this was a send-up, when he accidentally walked into the telescope—the oldest vaudeville trick in the world—and the *trouville* was instantly pressed into service. Equally, while he and Lorre were laughing over the oddities of the horror world, he remarked that what really killed him was the way in these films he always had his whole family buried just to hand, ready for all eventualities; and so a whole string of gags was born.

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I DON'T SUPPOSE ANYONE IS really surprised that *From Russia with Love* has been a box-office success, though the magnitude of its triumph must have surpassed even the fondest hopes of its creators: running at four West End-type cinemas at once and continuing to break records at all of them when already on release is quite an achievement, even after all one's scepticism about these multiple-fractured records has been taken into account. What interested me, though, was the attitude of the press towards the film. Clearly everyone knew



Vincent Price plays another demented sculptor in "Diary of a Madman".

at the outset that it must be a big popular success, and no one was going to be caught napping by giving it just a short, casual notice. A strong, clear line of some sort had to be taken, but that posed a problem. Could it be honestly recommended as a family film? And if it couldn't, what were the family papers to do, since, seeing it was going to be popular anyway, they could hardly be too cool and condescending towards it?

The answer, in the main, was to fall back on various permutations of the naughty-but-nice formula. Ann Pacey in the *Herald* summed up a lot when she said "All sex and sadism, perhaps, but I confess to enjoying every unlikely moment." Or, as Richard Roud put it in the *Guardian*: "Neither uplifting, instructive nor life-enhancing. Neither is it great filmmaking. But it sure is fun." The Sunday ladies agreed: Dilys Powell dubbed it "a film to be simply, uproariously enjoyed," and Penelope Gilliatt, though she wished Bond "thought his way out of more situations instead of kicking his way out," considered the film as a whole "a stunning bag of tricks." Most of the objections, in fact, came from the other side: David Benedictus in the *Express* grumbled that "where Ian Fleming's book was savage and lusty, the film is merely tough and sexy. The pain is painless without blood, the love is loveless without tenderness"; while the critic of the *Times* objected characteristically that Bond was really only "the secret ideal of the congenital square" and very small beer indeed to anyone habituated to early Bogart or "James Mason in his whip-cracking 1940s heyday." It was, in fact, left to Philip Oakes to express some ambiguous doubts about the healthiness of the whole thing ("I find it extraordinary that quasi-pornography—which seems to me a fairly clinical description of the Bond dossier—can now be presented as run-of-the-mill entertainment"), Isabel Quigly to wonder if she was being a spoilsport because she just didn't like it, and Nina Hibbin to uphold good old British puritanism in the *Daily Worker* with an impassioned cry of "Fun? That only makes it worse! What sort of a people are we if we can accept such perversion as a giggle?" Interesting question. Who knows, there may even be an interesting answer lurking there somewhere.

ARKADIN





## ROMAN POLANSKI

by GRETCHEN WEINBERG

Roman Polanski, the young director of *Knife in the Water* and *Two Men and a Wardrobe*, has been working recently in Paris, where he directed one of the episodes in the international short-story film *Les Plus Belles Escroqueries du Monde*. The following interview, taped during Mr. Polanski's recent visit to New York for the festival screening of *Knife in the Water*, was carried on almost simultaneously in Polish, English and French. Translation from the Polish is by Mr. Richard Horowitz, who acted as interpreter.

GRETCHEN WEINBERG: Mr. Polanski, would you tell me how you got started in the film world?

ROMAN POLANSKI: I began as an actor in the theatre, then I had small parts in several films, among them Wajda's *A Generation*. I enrolled for five years in the National Film Academy at Lodz, and while there I started making short subjects as part of my curriculum. Students were assigned to various directors; those who showed promise were remembered. I was assigned to Andrzej Munk. I made six shorts before directing my first feature.

Many people have called your films experimental. What do you think of that term?

I feel that any film in which a director wants to express something new and interesting is experimental. But I don't always think of myself as that kind of film-maker—only occasionally. In any case, I think the term has been misused to cover many different types of films. My opinion is not important, whether I think of myself as an experimental director or not . . .

Is there a new kind of film-making in Poland today?

It is difficult to describe any school or direction in Polish cinema, because it is still developing. After a while, when you can judge it from a distance and a certain perspective, you can talk in terms of directions and schools. With one exception: when a couple of 'independents' get together and say: "We're going to do this or that." But that doesn't happen very often. It's impossible to see a clearly defined direction for film making in Poland, because production is based on economics. When the New Wave occurred in France, that too was

founded on economics: the directors had to form groups in order to be able to afford to make films. They had to create a new movement which could be publicised, and so could help them. Within this movement there are a lot of good film-makers, but there are also many with no talent who simply hang around. Fortunately, these people are dropping out; and when you talk about this New Wave in years to come, you will talk about the best people only.

Who do you think they will be?

Truffaut . . . Godard . . . Truffaut . . . (laughter)

It's impossible to have such a movement in Poland, because there creative groups are built up and put together by the government: we have eight such production groups created by the Ministry of Culture, but you are free to join any of them. They are already created, and you cannot start another group yourself.

There is complete freedom to work within these groups, but if your idea is not accepted you won't get financial support. In France, a group of people gets together and says "We're going to create a new movement," and they are very conscious of what they are doing. In Poland, things like this may occur, but they are subconscious when they do happen. When viewing the films later, you may see that they have certain things in common. *Knife in the Water* was made in one of these groups; there is no production outside them.

Would you like to make a film in the United States?

Of course! I have very vague plans for doing so, however. I don't prefer making films in Poland or France: it would depend on the kind of film. I don't feel that I would like to make another film like *Knife in the Water* anywhere, for instance.

You once said that you make films because you don't speak very well. Do you feel that you really express yourself better that way?

I like to talk, but I don't know how. I have no problems when I talk to my friends, but I feel that for me language is difficult as a means of expression. I had a lot of problems with the writing of my films, although I managed to get over these difficulties through practice. For my first shorts, there were no words, just drawings. When I wrote the script for *Knife in the Water*, there were no drawings, only words. Usually, though, I like to draw scenes and camera set-ups. People have said the shots in *Knife in the Water* were well composed—that's



"Les Plus Belles Escroqueries du Monde": Nicole Karen in the Polanski episode, which is set in Holland.



because I don't like to talk, I like to show. The picture is the most important part of a film. If it shows nothing, the film makes no sense; if it consists of talking only, there is no need for the picture. On the other hand, there are films which are very talkative but which would be meaningless without the visuals. If you want to show a man, you have to show him in his natural environment, and language is part of what he is surrounded with; but I don't like talkative people or situations. You can find certain situations in which people talk a lot but you cannot understand them: it's not important what they are saying, but it is important what kind of mood they are creating.

*When you begin a film, do you start with a basic idea or just a mood?*

With a mood. I build up around that and the idea comes later. It's easy to manage, since I write both dialogue and script myself. In America they have different departments for making films: there's even a corrector of scripts. But there are no union problems in Poland.

*Are there any Polish directors you admire?*

Yes! Wajda—very much. And Jan Lenica.

*Knife in the Water dealt with the relationship between three people: do you prefer to make films dealing with such relationships rather than with broader subjects?*

My ideal would be to make a film with just one person. I'm very much interested in a man and in what he thinks. I'd also like to make a film with only two characters. But it's very difficult to make such a film; very difficult to find someone to back me up . . . Have you read Rilke?

. . . What I have created up to now is very bad because I was dealing with three people, not two. In literature, in a marriage, you can always find the third person . . . Rilke said that if he had the courage to write another treatise he would write about two people only, because the actual conflict occurs between two people: the third person is completely unnecessary. The third person is just an excuse, not only for the writer but for the couple in the marriage. In *Knife in the Water*, the young boy is just an excuse; the conflict is between the couple.

*Many people say that Knife in the Water is a comedy. Do you see it that way?*

I don't think about it. I leave that to the public. When I make a film I want people to like it, and I'm pleased when they do. I'm aiming at two types of audience: the most intelligent and at the same time the general public. It's not very hard to be understood by intelligent people, and the public is gaining a lot because it is learning.

*What do you think of the many war films made today: of Godard's Les Carabiniers, for instance?*

Ah, *Les Carabiniers*! Formidable! But the basis of art has always been love and war. It is understood that there are war films: everyone says there are too many, but it's not very significant what action is taking place within these films. The environment of war is not really as important as the conflicts between people. War creates very specific conflicts, it makes them more drastic, and this makes things easier for the director. It's enough to show two fighting men during a war who find themselves in a shell-hole—a director can find fantastic things here to work with. You would have to break your head thinking up a similar situation to deal with.

*Do you like Hollywood films?*

Yes, very much. Not all of them, but some. There is a great deal of snobbery in decrying Hollywood films and praising European, but there's a lot of truth, too. There are no young people in Hollywood.

*There are any number of theories about film-making. Do you believe in theory, or just simply in making films?*

I don't believe in them. I believe in theories as far as they deal with elevators and skyscrapers—and even elevators sometimes break down.

*There was a large film society in New York called Cinema 16 which used to show experimental films. Do you think an*



"Knife in the Water": Roman Polanski with Jolanta Umecka. The drawing on the opposite page is Polanski seen by Polanski.

*organisation like that is useful to educate the public?*

Yes, it's a good idea; everything that educates is good, and the only way to raise the general level is by exposing the public to more and more difficult films. In France, for the anniversary of Gérard Philipe's death, they revived his old film *Le Diable au Corps*, and they found that nobody now wanted to see this picture, which had a great success in its day. Public taste has changed tremendously during the last few years, and films now have to have something extra about them to attract audiences. I feel that's very good.

*Could a young person in Poland make a film with just his own money?*

No. The way of going about it is so slow and difficult that there is no sense in trying. I know that in the U.S. young people work and make films with the money they earn. As long as they have money to make films, that's fine. You have the right to waste your own money, but not somebody else's. No young person in Poland has enough money to make a feature film, so if you are given a sum of money by the government you have to use it the right way, not to be called a social disaster.

*Is there more freedom for film-makers in France than in Poland?*

There are different criteria. In France, for instance, you are not allowed to criticise the police. Right now, the situation in France is such that you cannot criticise anything you want to—you have to make nice films. In Poland, nobody would give you money to criticise the regime, because the government is the producer of the film and no producer will give you money to make a film against himself.

*Do you know the subject of your next film?*

I know what I would like to do. It's a story of a married couple, he is approximately 46 or 48, and she is 22 or 23. They live in a seaside house which is falling apart. He is very rich but she is ruining him slowly by her extravagance; she is crazy, but he's in love with her. A wounded gangster falls into the house where he finds shelter . . .

*In Knife in the Water, Two Men and a Wardrobe, and again in this projected film, the sea plays a prominent part. Do you have any special feeling about the sea?*

Yes, I like water. I like the smell of water . . .

(Mr. Polanski puffed out his lips and made the putt-putt sound of a motor boat.)





# RESNAIS' MURIEL

HE ONLY DOES IT to annoy, because he knows it teases . . . There are critics, and even a few critics one respects, who would seem prepared to settle for the old nursery phrase as applied to Alain Resnais. They could put up with his brilliance, but they feel somehow that he is not quite serious: that he can't possibly mean what he says, or that if he does mean it he ought to be saying it in an altogether more direct way, or that (i.e. the fuss over the bomb references in *Hiroshima*) he is not the person to say it anyway. The kind of

cross-talk act engaged in by Resnais and Robbe-Grillet after *Marienbad*, each insisting on the absolute clarity of the film, and each making it sound more impenetrable with every word uttered, was no great help to anybody. And now we have *Muriel* (United Artists), opening up the way to more interpretations, re-interpretations and agonised appraisals. Resnais has said that he hopes his new film will prove more "readable" than *Marienbad*. It is precisely that: a novel where *Marienbad* was a dream, a film of the daylight against a film of the night. Will this protect Resnais from the old charge of wilful obscurantism? One would like to think so, but I somehow doubt it.

There is something chameleon-like about Resnais' ability to take on a sort of colouring from his writers, and yet at the same time to preserve intact our awareness that in each of his films the preoccupied mind is that of the director. The pre-occupation, of course, is with time and what it does to people: the filtering of experience through the mind; the richness and the vagaries of memory; the inconsequential action and the hidden motive; and the dislocations of the mind itself, which mean that recollection is not an orderly progression but a series of perilous transitions. Resnais' feature writers—Marguerite Duras, Alain Robbe-Grillet, and now the poet and novelist Jean Cayrol—have all been equipped to take this dive into memory, but with Cayrol Resnais is able to find something new. Not the earlier intensity (could one imagine the woman's narrative in *Hiroshima* interrupted by the need to cook a meal or make a bed?), but a much less obsessional observation of what, in the context, can only be called the human comedy.

Cayrol writes primarily about people, where Mme. Duras and M. Robbe-Grillet wrote primarily about concentrated emotion; and if *Muriel* is Resnais' densest and most closely packed film, this is at least partly because of the range of characterisation it comprises. At the centre is Hélène Aughain, a widow of about forty, precariously established in an apartment which is also an antique shop and living in a kind of purposeful clutter. She serves her visitors frozen chicken off plates which she has already sold; she is a compulsive gambler, playing the depressing game of *boule* every evening at Boulogne-sur-Mer's stark municipal casino. She is loved by a solid, dependable man with the splendid name of de Smoke, proprietor of a demolition firm and so a dealer in the debris of the past. But she summons up a *revenant* out of her own memory in the form of Alphonse, her romantic first love of more than twenty years ago, now a failed restaurant proprietor and, one assumes, failed everything else, who brings in tow a young actress, Françoise, brashly introduced as his niece.

Hélène's invitation to Alphonse is a deliberate attempt to bridge a war and twenty years of history and to rediscover an experience which now exists only as an elusive memory. Her stepson, Bernard, is haunted by a much more tangible souvenir: the forlorn spectre of Muriel (although "that couldn't have been her real name"), an Algerian girl whom he helped to torture. For Bernard, memory means obsession: life has effectively stopped since a certain day in the Algerian war, and forgetfulness, of the kind he finds with his girl friend Marie-Do, and might find with the precise, clear-sighted Françoise, is a betrayal of the unforgiving past. Hélène can live mistily with her memories, but will continually be putting them to the test of present reality. Bernard can only move forward through a literal destruction of the past. So Resnais' theme, or a major part of his theme, is at once the compelling power and the futility of memory. The past is a kind of stimulus which sees us through the present; and is as fraught with danger as most stimulants.

The essential thing about *Muriel* is that its characters are talking not to the audience but to each other. Resnais has abandoned the duologue form of *Hiroshima* and *Marienbad*, with its convention of the one who speaks and the one who listens, to plunge into the thick of a situation. His characters



know only what they know; and if there is, somewhere, an objective "truth" about them to be grasped, it is up to our intuition to perceive it. As to who and what they are, however, Resnais and Cayrol sprinkle numerous clues, and clues of an entirely conventional order. Within moments of our introduction to Alphonse, he is trying to borrow money; Françoise, the girl effectively without a past, says that she "envies people with good memories"; de Smoke is immediately introduced as an expert in demolition, Hélène as an amateur of preservation, and so on. Such indications of character are made directly, generally through dialogue, and are plainly intended to counterbalance the elliptical visual style.

In the film's opening shots, Hélène is dealing with a customer at the door of her flat, while Bernard makes coffee in the kitchen. Resnais does not let us take in the whole scene at a glance, as he could quite easily do, but breaks it into fragmentary details: the customer's hand on the door; Hélène's listening face; the hot water poured from the kettle; the apartment's confusion of furniture. The totality of the scene emerges only *after* the shots have been absorbed into our consciousness: and this, as it develops, is to be the film's method. As Hélène brings her visitors from the station, along the night streets of Boulogne, Resnais cuts in broad daylight shots of the town; as she mentions the bombing of Boulogne, he flashes a series of street name-plates, moving from the enamelled present to the scarred past. Individual shots, both here and at intervals later in the film, are held so briefly that the effect becomes almost subliminal: it is not the shot in itself that counts, but the impressions and associations we retain from it.

Resnais, at such moments, gives his audience credit for unusual alertness. It was only on a third viewing, for instance, that I realised that de Smoke's story of the sliding house, newly built on the edge of a cliff and gradually slithering towards dissolution, actually refers to a house seen some twenty minutes earlier in the film—and that, moreover, we then heard the tag-end of what is clearly a much-repeated anecdote. But if there is more to *Muriel* than can be taken in at a first viewing, this does not mean that the effect is one of restlessness or dislocation. Everything essential comes through clearly, thanks partly to the brilliance with which the action has been dovetailed into an exemplary setting. For Boulogne itself is a town of memories: of new cafés and shops and blocks of flats built on the ruins of the war. A group of men in a restaurant try to recall the precise sequence of shops in a vanished street; Hélène remembers, enchantingly, the "old Folkestone" hotel. It may seem a conceit that, by the end of the film, the trains from Paris no longer stop at the old station; but apparently it is also a fact.

In a shifting world, the past survives only through memories as illusive and inaccurate as dreams. For a while, Hélène can half-persuade Alphonse to share her dream, until he tires of the game. Bernard holds the story of Muriel in his mind, but his only "evidence" is some flickering home-movie shots of cheerful soldiers in Algeria, broken by a single haunted view of a dark road at night. "Every person is a world," says Cayrol's script, reminding us of Proust's "those distant worlds that are other people." Tangentially, the worlds touch. And, meanwhile, meals are eaten, antiques sold, shop windows stared into, postcards turned over, seaside walks taken. Whatever one might have expected after Resnais' two previous films, one would not have predicted this superstructure of accurate, and often very amusing, detail. If his elliptical editing technique needs defending, which I can't think it does, one need hardly look further than the dazzling cutting of the first supper scene, conveying Hélène's contained nervousness at every leap forward; or the way in which he uses overlapping dialogue less for atmosphere than for sheer economy and

precision, or to point the occasional ironic contrast (i.e. Hélène's words about Alphonse's promise of fidelity, carried over the first shots of the faithful de Smoke).

Eventually, however, Resnais and Cayrol have to draw the threads together: *Muriel* is not to be merely atmospheric, a mood piece about two weeks in a harbour town. The film ends on several positive happenings: the arrival of Ernest, Alphonse's brother-in-law, to blow the gaff on the defaulter and drag him back to his bankrupt restaurant; Françoise's decision to get away from this world of other people's jaded memories; and Bernard's flight into action, by killing the man who shared with him the experience of Muriel. Before these things can happen there is a sequence of exquisite ease, a Sunday lunch, relaxed and timeless, offering another memory to be stored up. Resnais wants here to break a mood with the maximum abruptness: to move from the entranced stillness of Ernest's song, with its reminder that we can never be twenty again, into the violence of Bernard's flight and the quarrel between Ernest and Alphonse (punctuated, this, with shots of sternly rectangular modern flats). Yet the transition cannot come entirely unheralded; and it is to this end, I would suggest—although tentatively, since this seems to me the most debatable section of the film—that he again uses almost subliminal devices to create an atmosphere of menace. There are the glimpses of Ernest at his detective pursuits; the atmosphere of intrigue thrown around the scene at the Alsatian café; Hélène's broken telephone call to de Smoke; a police car careering through the streets; a shot of Bernard at the bottom of a flight of steps, confronting a dangerous-looking group of young men. Some of these things have a direct explanation within the film's context; some do not. I assume Resnais here to be laying his groundwork: offering images which will sink, almost unobserved, into our awareness.

The film ends in a flurry of action, but within its shifting structure the sense of direction has been so sure that nothing seems extraneous. Shifty to the last, Alphonse runs away. Hélène retreats again into the past, to an old friend, dressed for the nineteenth-century and living with her tailor husband in a quietly stable nineteenth-century room, who can welcome Hélène into her own tranquillity. To complete the circle, the film can only end as it began, with a strange woman (Alphonse's wife, we deduce) arriving at Hélène's flat and



Opposite page: Hélène and de Smoke (Claude Sainval).  
Right: Jean-Baptiste Thierrée, Jean Champion and Delphine Seyrig.



stepping delicately and inquisitively among her possessions. The last shot is of the abandoned lunch table.

"In *Marienbad*," Resnais has said, "the story took place in the minds of the characters. In *Muriel* the people will be seen from the outside. We will never penetrate the thoughts and minds of our characters. These will show themselves only through their actions." The worst mistake anyone could make about *Muriel* would be to approach it as though it were another *Marienbad*, a work engaged with the riddles of the mind. *Muriel* has its crossword puzzle element, in the sense that Resnais leaves some blank clues to be guessed at, but fundamentally he and Cayrol are not concerned with mystery-making but with elucidation. Characters who move on the periphery—Claudie, the friend from whom Hélène borrows money, the patient de Smoke, the *deus ex machina*, Ernest, even the customer who wants a painting with ruins, "but not sad ruins"—are immediately and positively established. With the main characters (Nita Klein as Françoise, Jean-Baptiste Thierrée as Bernard, Jean-Pierre Kérien as Alphonse) we are told all we need to know; and in the case of Hélène, played by Delphine Seyrig with striking flexibility and warmth, we are given a whole person. It would be difficult to complain about *Muriel*, as critics did about *Marienbad*, that it was an encounter between shadows.

But the great advance of *Muriel*, even over Resnais' previous films, rests in its ability to do two things at once: to cope simultaneously with the obscure emotional life and the daylight surface. The perfectionist detail and the total collaboration with the cameraman (Sacha Vierny, working this time in colour) and the composer (Hans Werner Henze) are means to this end. *Muriel* has been read by some people as an allegory of contemporary France, haunted by her Algerian memories, her war memories, and so on. This seems to me the sort of wild hunt after "significance" that can only be damaging to one's actual experience of the film. It is enough to see a few people, rather than a country, trapped with the past; and it is with the evanescence of men and things, the way a house falls over a cliff and a memory becomes a lie, that *Muriel* is concerned. Recollection is not a matter of total recall but of haphazard fragments. Yet out of these fragments we contrive to construct a whole, as Resnais and Cayrol find a unity in the fragile details on which they have built this solid and beautiful structure.

PENELOPE HOUSTON

## THE LEOPARD

EVEN THOUGH *Il Gattopardo* has enlarged the life of E. M. Forster, and those who read it in the original are properly thrilled by its linguistic colour, cooler judgments based on Archibald Colquhoun's translation must admit the limitations of Prince Giuseppe di Lampedusa's novel. It remains a brilliant amateur work, insufficiently self-critical, inadequately revised. The much-discussed anachronistic images seem mischievously startling in a work whose sense of period is generally so good. The psychological observation is very exact, but not more important than you would expect in a historical romance. As an historical novel *Il Gattopardo* is not unambitious: it aims to reflect the whole political and social revolution that converged on 1860, through the affairs of one noble family; but the historical element is too schematically integrated with the fictional; and there are disconcerting touches of the L. du Garde Peach variety of historical reconstruction ("... some German Jew whose name I can't remember ...," and we all understand that he means Marx).

The merits and defects of the novel are directly relevant to Luchino Visconti's *The Leopard* (Fox), for it is as literal and reverent an adaptation as any author could hope for. The differences are few enough to detail. Visconti has confined the action to the years 1860–62, omitting the two final chapters of the novel which describe the death of the Prince of Salina in 1883, and the survival of the gay young people of 1860 to become the old cranks of 1910. He has also omitted a sub-plot in which Father Pirrone, the Salina chaplain, organises a peasant marriage of convenience which exactly parallels

the marriage of Salina's poor but noble nephew to one of the new rich, and rather heavily points the moral that "Nobles were reserved and incomprehensible, peasants explicit and clear; but the Devil twisted them both round his little finger all the same." Visconti has also added some scenes of his own of fighting in the Garibaldini revolt at Palermo, which are clearly excremental and (perhaps owing to some cutting prior to the Cannes showing) rather unclear.

Generally, however, there is a feeling that Visconti has set out to edulcorate the tale. The omission of the last chapters somewhat softens the Prince's image of a new world in which "Everything must change if we want to stay the same," and where the jackals and the hyenas are destined to replace the Leopards and the Lions. Details are changed in their effect. Lampedusa enjoyed images of putrefaction and decay; but Visconti sweetens them. The soldier's body which the Salinas find in the garden was a real horror in the novel: in the film it is another of Visconti's beautiful, languid young men. The chamber-pots in the gentlemen's retiring room at the ball, which provide Visconti with a not inelegant symbol, were "brimful, spilling over" in the novel.

All this is in line with Visconti's whole approach. He has first and foremost set out to make a beautiful and fascinating spectacle, and he has succeeded. The *mise en scène* is superb. Each scene is staged with the rhythm of a choreographer and the composition of a painter: Tancredi's departure in the early morning, leaping down the palace steps in his comic-opera hat with all the Salinas gazing longingly on; the Salinas' dinner table; the church at Donnafugata where the whole family, dusty and sick, freeze into statues of antique nobility; the ball which fills the last three-quarters of an hour of the film, displaying a microcosm of a whole society, as the guests progress from the brilliance of their arrival to the sweaty, strained, yawning faces of a 6 a.m. departure.

*Mise en scène* includes the marvellous ensemble of players. Burt Lancaster has quite confounded all expectations by embodying the noble Prince of Salina, whose liberalism is half policy and half the indolence of an exhausted race. And one would hardly have anticipated the equal success of Alain Delon and Claudia Cardinale in conveying the motives that bring together the noble youth and the bourgeois girl and look *almost* like love—his worldly-wise impoverishment; her social aspirations and new riches. But all the performances are conceived so exactly in the context of the tale and the period, that in singling out for instance Serge Reggiani's Tumeo, or Lucilla Morlacchi's beautifully Victorian Concetta or Rina Morelli's superstitious, dull, wilted Princess Maria Stella, one does injustice to all the other secondary and minor players who are just as shrewdly cast and impeccably directed.

It is a film of enormous virtuosity and brio; and at Cannes a distinguished British director called it "aesthetic rubbish". This is hard; the fact remains that Visconti has not added much to the importance of the novel. It is still a brilliant historical romance and not much more. Its social and psychological perceptions are not much deeper; and we might have expected them to be so with Visconti who, apart from anything else, reflects the central historical situation of *Il Gattopardo* in his own life as aristocrat and Party member.

There are certain losses in the version shown here. In length the film seems to have been cut by about 15 minutes before it went to Cannes, and by a further 25 minutes since. I must admit that only five months after Cannes I am unable from memory to identify cuts. Something may have gone from the hunting scene with the Prince and Tumeo; something more with Colonel Pallavicino at the ball; but nothing of importance enough to be able to particularise at this stage. Dubbing seems in this case eminently preferable to a subtitled version of the film. The subtleties of the dialogue—whose political references are sometimes a little elusive for non-Italians—are rendered much better than subtitles could do. As dubbing goes, this is particularly good; and in any case at least four of the principals, including Burt Lancaster, who dubs his own voice in the Anglo-American version, were dubbed in the Italian original.

The worst loss is the film's spectacular quality. The original large-screen version in Technirama and Technicolor has been adapted to a De Luxe color CinemaScope version. The loss in quality can only be measured by one's disappointment now in scenes that seemed breathtaking in Cannes: Tancredi's departure, the dinner table, the arrival at Donnafugata, though they still have Nino Rota's lush, evocative music and the pretty Verdi waltz to help them, no longer command the applause they drew at Cannes. And with a little of the dazzle diminished, the shortcomings of the film are a shade more exposed.

DAVID ROBINSON





"Dr. Strangelove": Turgidson (George C. Scott) leads the General Staff in prayer.

## DR. STRANGELOVE

WRITING THIS REVIEW in the shadow of the assassination of President Kennedy, when the unbelievable actually occurred, one's mind is forced back by an irresistible connection to *The Manchurian Candidate*; and even if Frankenheimer's film got the plot details wrong, events have made mincemeat of criticisms that it was all too extravagantly improbable. Now *Dr. Strangelove* (BLC/Columbia) stalks the same far-out country, and comes up with the same chillingly mocking warning that tragedy is not only possible, but probable.

General Ripper, commander of an American nuclear base at Burpelson, mentally unbalanced by health worries, suddenly initiates a B-52 nuclear attack on Russia. When the news reaches the Pentagon war room, a recall is ordered, but the aircraft, following operational instructions designed to foil enemy interference, have cut off radio communications. They can be reached only by special code, known only to General Ripper; and Ripper, also according to instructions, has sealed off his base. An American task force, sent to Burpelson, engages in fierce combat with the American defence force, who believe them to be disguised Communist invaders. Meanwhile, U.S. President Muffley puts through a personal call of apology to U.S.S.R. Premier Kissov, to meet with sympathetic regret and a revelation that the Russian "Doomsday" master deterrent, powerful enough to destroy the entire planet, is primed to be set off by any nuclear explosion, and cannot be un-set. Group Captain Mandrake, R.A.F., a survivor of the Burpelson battle, at last deduces the code from Ripper's ravings, and a recall is sent. One aircraft, its wireless destroyed by missiles, does not respond. Its course and target are revealed to the Russians, with a request that they concentrate all resources on shooting it down. Meanwhile the pilot, dangerously short of fuel from damaged tanks, changes course for a closer target . . .

As the foregoing may suggest, *Dr. Strangelove*, or (one must get its enchanting subtitle in somehow) *How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*, is a very tough film indeed, which makes no last minute concession, and which bids fair to achieve the unlikely distinction of being the most hilariously funny and the most nightmarish film of the year. Stanley Kubrick, on ample evidence, is not only a clever but a cunning director, and *Dr. Strangelove* is his most Machiavellian film yet. Although it develops, ultimately, into wild farce (one can easily see how the custard-pie finale, not actually

used in the film, could have been conceived), it has laid its serious basis so firmly that its grip cannot be loosened. Everybody, one realises by the end, is mad. And Kubrick's frightening vision here is the enormity of madness which can lie behind an exterior sane enough to walk, talk and work with calm competence, or behind a perfectly reasonable remark. General Turgidson, for instance, challenged by his President with the fact that the attack is an unauthorised error, responds with offended dignity, "I don't think it's fair to condemn a whole programme because of a single slip-up." Character after eminently reasonable character reveals some mild quirk which swells uncontrollably into blinkered obsession: General Ripper's health fad about distilled water, we realise, becomes diseased terror of a Communist plot to debilitate the liquids of the human body by tampering with the world's drinking-water; Colonel Guano mutters agitatedly about "deviated preverts" (*sic*); General Turgidson screams about "moronic peons" and hugs secret files to his breast like an anxious schoolboy as the war room is thrown open to the Russian ambassador; the Russian ambassador busily photographs secret equipment as the world literally disappears. Even the British *sang-froid* of the R.A.F. officer, the most sympathetic character in the film, takes on the dimensions of *rigor mortis*.

By the time *Dr. Strangelove* himself appears, about halfway through, the familiar world we know from Defence Plans, White Papers and Summit Conferences has undergone a perfectly logical metamorphosis into a nightmare version of Carroll's Wonderland. In a world studded with throw-switches invitingly lettered "Auto-Destruct" and files labelled "World Targets in Megadeaths," *Dr. Strangelove*—American nuclear expert of dubious Germanic origins—is a natural inhabitant: a latter-day Dr. Mabuse, whose metal arm springs automatically to the "Sieg Heil!" or twitches frantically to key words like "slaughtered" and "sexual," and who chuckles in manic glee as he calculates that survivors will be able to emerge from subterranean hideouts after only 100 years.

Kubrick manages this bewildering slither from real to unreal and back again with total mastery. Unlike *Paths of Glory* with its lazy sweep of tracking shots, or *Lolita* with its arrogantly sensual arabesques, *Dr. Strangelove* is choppy, abrupt, at times as urgently graceless as a newsreel, at others breathtakingly well lit and shot. The battle between the two American units looks like a documentary; the flight of the aircraft (travelling matte and dummy plane) looks, exactly as it is meant to look, contrived; the President is seen at one moment half-obscured by intervening shoulders, as



though photographed by an intruding newspaperman, at another in studio close-up exchanging telephonic civilities with his Russian counterpart ("No, Dimitri, no . . . you *couldn't* be more sorry than I am . . ."). The result is that we are faced with a reality that becomes fantasy and, by extension, a fantasy that could so easily become reality.

The same tightrope balance is, miraculously, sustained by the acting. Central, obviously, is Peter Sellers in another multiple role as President, R.A.F. Officer, and Strangelove. What might so easily have been a trick is, in fact, completely successful, partly because only Strangelove is played for full Goon extravagance, with the R.A.F. officer an affectionately gentle caricature, and the mild, balding, affable President played almost straight. The real saving factor, however, is that Sellers is only a brilliant key in a brilliantly cast film, where each actor (with the exception of Peter Bull's self-indulgent Russian ambassador) finds an image which is both ludicrous and unnervingly exact: Sterling Hayden (Ripper), impassively stern and cigar-chewing through all his ravings, ominously shot from below; George C. Scott (Turgidson), all jumping-jack volatility, enthusiasm and little-boy hurt looks; Keenan Wynn (Guano), bovine devotion and indifferent incomprehension; Slim Pickens (the pilot), Texan drawl, gallantry, and wild incongruity.

A film which maintains the courage of its convictions to the bitter end is rare enough; even rarer is one which pursues its course with such relentless logic. Kubrick tells his story with such control that, although one knows the inevitable conclusion, one has no idea how it will happen, and each episode comes not only as another nail in the coffin, but as a frightening demonstration of how power politics have become a Frankenstein monster which one little error can send out of control. A tough film, then, which makes one think, laugh and weep in equal proportions, and which ends on an image which makes every other film about The Bomb look like a pretty game: mushroom clouds billow over the vast, unpeopled surface of the earth, and Vera Lynn's voice croons consolingly from a mysterious limbo beyond the soundtrack, "We'll meet again . . . some sunny day." A sick film? I think, rather, one of bitter denunciation and hopeful warning. A lot of Americans, unfortunately, are likely to find it hard to take.

TOM MILNE

## THE SERVANT and THE CARETAKER

PERHAPS ONE OF THE most encouraging things about the British cinema at the moment is that two such films as *The Servant* (Warner-Pathé) and *The Caretaker* (BLC/British Lion) can get made at all. The scripts of both were written by Harold Pinter. In the British cinema the author's identity does not usually mean very much, but in these two cases Pinter has been an unusually close and important collaborator with the director: complete author of the scripts (in the case of *The Servant* after a very 'Pinterish' story by Robin Maugham), present during the shooting, associate producer on one film, actor in the other . . . One would expect both films to be strongly marked by his very idiosyncratic personality, and so indeed they are. But however distinctive the personality of the writer, one would still expect a film—any film—directed by Joseph Losey to be very different from any film directed by Clive Donner. And it is in those differences, and in the relative advantages and disadvantages of the two approaches, that the chief fascination of comparing the films lies.

Cinematically—whatever that means—*The Servant* is by far the more distinguished of the two. Even at his worst Losey is never dull, and here he is pretty consistently at his best. The visual style is highly-wrought, but for once the subject matter can carry it without strain. The strange story of an obsessive relationship between a young, inexperienced master and a smooth, over-experienced servant clearly calls for an all-out bravura style (unless the director went right to the other extreme of Bressonian concentration, but there is enough picturesqueness and deliberate oddity in the screenplay to prevent that). And, of course, when it comes to visual bravura no one in the British cinema excels Losey. With the enthusiastic collaboration of his usual production designer, Richard MacDonald, and his cameraman Douglas Slocombe, he gets every last ounce of value from the house in which most of the action takes place (one of those palatial interiors grandly unconcerned with the

modest exterior dimensions of a Chelsea terrace) and plays the outdoor scenes—Chelsea Hospital and reflective puddles; Chiswick House under snow—for all they are worth.

In this remote, artificial world anything could happen, and we are not really surprised when it does. The drama takes place in an elegantly appointed hothouse which the servant makes it his job to keep as warm and comfortable, as effectively insulated from outside reality as possible, and this is the essence of his hold on and gradual ascendancy over his master. The edgy, shifting relationship between the two men is perfectly captured right from their first encounter, with Barrett (Dirk Bogarde) already unobtrusively one up when his preliminary prowling through the empty rooms finally brings him upon Tony asleep, the picture of lethargy and all ready to be taken over. Subsequently, as the house is elaborated round Tony and the ubiquitous Barrett gradually makes himself indispensable, Douglas Slocombe's elegant low-key lighting and Losey's camera, constantly on the move, caressing the smooth rich furnishings and catching the last reassuring gleam of old silver and polished glass, evoke with extraordinary vividness and precision that lotus-land in which Barrett tempts Tony to laze his life away. All this is director and writer working impeccably hand in glove. Tony's house is a sophisticated upper-class extension of the recurrent symbol in Pinter's early plays, the room-womb which offers a measure of security in an insecure world, an area of light in the surrounding darkness. But here the security is a trap sprung on the occupant by his own promptings and by the servant who embodies them and knows too well how to exploit them.

Losey is perfectly equipped to convey the hints of decadence and perversity implicit in the action of the first two-thirds of the film, and the aura of sado-masochistic fantasy which surrounds the relationship between Tony and Barrett and becomes overtly apparent in the extraordinary sequence of 'indoor games' near the end. Indeed, up to this point it is difficult to fault his realisation in any particular, except perhaps that the pace of the film is so persistently measured that at times the tension slackens just when it could be tightening. Thereafter, though, things go a little adrift as Losey, in his determination presumably to put over his interpretation of the story as a modern *Faust*, plunges into absurdity with an orgy straight out of *Eve* and a sudden presentation of Barrett as a mocking, railing Mephistopheles. Even this, admittedly, is well done in its way, but one cannot avoid the feeling that it belongs to another, altogether less interesting film.

By comparison, *The Caretaker* is a model of sobriety and propriety. No directorial flourishes, no obtrusive attempts to make the film 'cinematic'. And yet it is not, after all, stagy; it simply illustrates the truth of Pinter's answer to someone who once asked him whether



"The Caretaker": Donald Pleasence and Robert Shaw.



he made any clear distinction of technique depending on which medium he was writing for: "No, I just write about characters; after all, they don't know what medium they're appearing in, do they?" *The Caretaker* was a play about three people in a room; now it is a film about three people in a room. If the direction lacks any very positive distinction, so that one seldom feels that the camera is in the only possible place for it at any given time, or that a cut comes exactly at the one inevitable moment, on the other hand it is never unmistakably wrong. The director has been content to observe the characters as they go about their business with each other, and since what they do and say is absorbing, this too is 'cinema'. As a matter of fact, Pinter's adaptation of his own play is extraordinarily acute in its recognition of what the cinema does and does not require. Although large amounts of the original have gone, particularly around the beginning of the third act, the correspondence of effect between play and film is remarkable; and the small additions in the shape of a couple of largely or entirely wordless exterior scenes have the proper effect of emphasising the intensity and isolation of the scenes in the room, rather than breaking concentration.

Thus we come back, finally, to one of the central paradoxes of film-making. Evidently *The Servant* is altogether a better example of the director's art, just as Joe Losey, right or wrong, is always a more gifted, individual director than Clive Donner. Yet, brilliant though *The Servant* is, *The Caretaker* remains more consistently absorbing. The writing is denser, though not too dense; it never says things which the special techniques of the cinema make it unnecessary to say. The acting is more uniformly outstanding; Alan Bates and Donald Pleasence are familiar in their roles, but at the same time so fresh that one would never guess how often they had played them on the stage, and Robert Shaw is, for British audiences at least, a revelation, especially in his flawless delivery of Aston's great, fiendishly difficult monologue. (Admittedly *The Servant* also boasts one superlative performance, from Dirk Bogarde, who is given the chance of his lifetime as Barrett and seizes it with both hands, and one piece of perfect casting—James Fox as the unfortunate Tony—but both the women are to varying degrees arguable.)

It is easy to say that the writing and acting are not specifically cinematic qualities, while the brilliance of Losey's direction is. Easy to say, but less easy to defend convincingly. The acting and writing, after all, are not in this case specifically non-cinematic qualities; *The Caretaker* is not just a so-so record of a first-class stage performance, but a work in which both are perfectly calculated for the film medium and only the direction is a little less than thrilling. If we admit that *The Caretaker* is more absorbing than *The Servant*, we have to say a more absorbing what. Let us hedge. *The Servant* is more absorbing as a film, *The Caretaker* as a dramatic experience. But then is a dramatic experience in the cinema anything else but a film? Can we split hairs in this way? Is, as the King of Siam remarked to Anna, a puzzlement. Let us agree, anyway, that the experience offered by *The Servant* is more essentially cinematic: it is difficult to imagine it working half so satisfactorily in any other medium, while with *The Caretaker*, evidently . . . But again, if only *The Caretaker* were directed anything like as well as *The Servant*, it too might have been turned into something essentially cinematic, like Cocteau's film of *Les Parents Terribles*. But Clive Donner is clearly no Cocteau; he is even far from being a Losey. And that is why the incidental advantages of his film over Losey's remain only incidental; why, though it is creditable and in many ways remarkable, it is not finally quite creditable and remarkable enough.

JOHN RUSSELL TAYLOR

## THE CARDINAL

SOME CAHIERS-TYPE CRITIC once airily remarked that if one didn't understand the genius of Otto Preminger, then one didn't understand the cinema. This sounds like a typical bit of *Cahiers* hyperbole, but there is more than a grain of truth in it. At least negatively: without some understanding of or interest in the technique of film-making, one is not likely to appreciate fully the virtues of Preminger's latest film, *The Cardinal* (BLC/Columbia). It is by far his most ambitious undertaking: the story of the rise of Stephen Fermoye from seminary student to cardinal, it ranges from Boston to Vienna and Rome, and from 1917 to 1938. A tremendous number of episodes are very effectively linked by a highly efficient screenplay, and interpreted by an extraordinary all-star cast extraordinarily used.

Based on a best-selling novel, *The Cardinal* is in fact an anthology of the problems facing the Roman Catholic Church in the twentieth century. We are spared little: intermarriage between Catholics and



Tom Tryon and Carol Lynley in "The Cardinal".

Jews; saving the child or saving the mother in childbirth; the Church's attitude towards the Nazis, the Church's attitude towards the Negro problem. (Curiously enough, only the Protestant-Catholic friction is omitted.) Nor are what one might call the internal problems of the Church neglected: the split between the American Church and the Roman Consistory; the "country priest" in the Bressonian sense versus the worldly businessman cleric. It would be pointless to pretend that these various elements are bound into an intellectually coherent whole, but they are to a surprising extent dramatically unified.

For Preminger has two major aces: he knows how to handle the camera, and he knows how to handle actors. Which, put together, means he knows how to make movies. A study of the camera movements in *The Cardinal* is of more than technical interest. It is often said in praise of some directors that their camera movements are inevitable. Preminger's are not. One never knows what he is going to do next, but once he has done it one feels its absolute rightness. The secret of his camera technique would seem to lie in an articulation of a number of short movements: a combination of sliding back, curving away and then scooping up. One is never conscious of the camera itself, however complex its movements, because Preminger is always careful to preserve a sense of spatial unity. Furthermore, Preminger never moves for the sake of movement: he is not afraid to stop the camera dead to hold an important conversation or speech. The cameraman is the remarkable Mr. Shamroy; his colour work has never been better and he manages to capture both the warm honeyed light of Rome and the almost Scandinavian purity of that of New England.

Of course, movies aren't about cameras. They are about people, and here again Preminger has excelled. Visconti took Romy Schneider and transformed her into quite another person. Preminger gets just as good a performance out of her by simply bringing out her own natural talent and ability. First as the young Viennese flirt who finds the seduction of a priest the supreme challenge, and later as the victim of her own equally schoolgirlish infatuation with the Nazis, she brings life and pathos to what might have been merely a clever plot twist. As the vain and crusty Archbishop of Boston, John Huston is so successful in this his acting debut that one is tempted to inquire whether he had not heretofore missed his vocation. Josef Meinrad as the Austrian Cardinal, Burgess Meredith as the country



priest, Dorothy Gish as Fermoy's mother—the gallery is endless. Only with Tom Tryon (who plays the leading role) has Preminger been less successful—though it was probably an impossible part to play. Non-stop goodness and piety are easily boring unless they are accompanied, as in *Le Journal d'un Curé de Campagne*, with transcendent grace, and Preminger's priest is just not that sort of man.

Certain seemingly conventional scenes in *The Cardinal* deserve to become anthology pieces: a vulnerable and surprisingly moving Carol Lynley confessing the sin of lust to her priest brother. The scene gains its emotional intensity by the subtle variations in pitch and volume—the confessional whisper which bursts out passionately and is then quickly repressed. Perhaps the most impressive sequence, however, is wordless. During a two-year trial period when Father Fermoy is allowed to go out into the world, though still bound by his vows, he is persuaded by Anne-Marie (Romy Schneider) to take her to a Viennese ball. Succumbing to its passionate gaiety, he returns to his room, top-hatted, white-tied, gaily whistling. Suddenly he is confronted with a Mephistophelian figure in the looking-glass: his own. So powerful is the image that—although no explanation is given—one is completely convinced by his decision to re-enter the Church. To have concentrated into that one image all the complex feelings that motivate this turning-point in a man's life is, I suggest, a supreme example of the film-maker's craft.

To be sure, *Advise and Consent* was also skilfully made and beautifully acted. Why, then, do I find *The Cardinal* immeasurably superior? Mostly, perhaps, because of the contrast between the material and the personality of the director. Preminger has always struck me as supremely cool; the subject matter of *The Cardinal* is as passionate and emotional as a Victorian melodrama. Whereas the meeting of ice and ice in *Advise and Consent* only turned up a beautiful glacier, the shock of the contact of fire and ice has produced an exciting film. Across the gap between the personality of the director and his subject the sparks never cease to fly.

RICHARD ROUD

## THE BALCONY

PERHAPS THE MOST ENCOURAGING thing about Joseph Strick's version of *The Balcony* (BLC/British Lion) is that a Hollywood film should be Genet enough to reduce *Films in Review* to a state of twittering shock. "Whatever reputation Jean Genet has among beatniks and other psychopaths," they begin firmly, to conclude equally firmly after demolishing the film, that "only the neurotic and the sexually perverted will be interested in it."

In a sense, *Films in Review* speaks truer than it intended, for one of Genet's main themes is the normality of abnormality: all the world's a fantasy of sex and power, and all of us are players in it. Three clients arrive at Madame Irma's "House of Illusion" to act out, with the help of her whores, their fantasies of being Judge, Bishop and General. Outside a revolution rages, and the Police Chief dreams of being the strong man who will restore order. To delude the populace into thinking that all is well, he persuades the three clients to masquerade as the dead or missing city dignitaries. Having tasted glory, they are tempted to assume their fantasy roles permanently, but are recalled to reality by the Police Chief, who finally achieves his own dream when Roger, the defeated revolutionary leader, comes to Madame Irma to act out his fantasy of being the all-powerful Police Chief. The only difference, Genet argues, between Madame Irma's clients on the one hand, and the Police Chief and real dignitaries on the other, is that whereas the pervers act out their fantasies harmlessly in private, the others act theirs, dangerously, in public: it is from the temptation to live up to the public image, to swell the myth, that dictators and tyrants are born.

Admittedly, as scripted by Ben Maddow, only about half of the original survives, and its intricate web of cross-fertilising references has been thinned out. For instance, Madame Irma, the purveyor of dreams, herself indulges the biggest dream of them all—to be Queen; yet, in the film, she refuses the Police Chief's invitation to realise her dream in public. More damagingly, the focal character of the play has entirely disappeared: Chantal, the whore who deserts the illusion of the brothel for the reality of the revolution, only to become enshrined as the emblem of revolt. Chantal, in other words, demonstrates that even if the shells and bullets are real, the revolution is a fantasy like any other, in which she will dream of living up to her role as Joan of Arc, and Roger will live up to his dream of being a dictator. In the film, this parallel between the House of Illusion and the Revolution is never properly drawn, because Chantal (the direct link) is missing, and because the revolutionary

motif is virtually reduced to a pre-credit actuality sequence of street fighting which never quite connects with the rest of the film.

The half of the play which remains, however, comes over well. On the stage, the difficult blend of ritual beauty and vulgarity demanded by Genet has always tended to lead to over-heated furtiveness. Here, without undercutting the eroticism, Strick has avoided this trap by playing up the matter-of-factness of Madame Irma's business—the normality of abnormality—and by concentrating on Genet's cool humour: when Irma firmly tells the "Bishop" to leave after his time is up, for instance, he absent-mindedly undoes the buttons of her dress while she, intent on the business on hand, equally absent-mindedly slaps the wandering hand. The film-studio brothel, with its endless succession of flimsy sets, effectively suggests the stagy, formal beauty of the fantasy world of the clients, and underlines the ordinariness of it all: the clients are not furtive little men in dirty raincoats, but tired workers indulging in a therapeutic visit to a dream strip-club; the whores are not voluptuous wrecks, but patient girls knitting or soaking their feet while they rest from their chores; and Madame Irma herself, surrounded by her card-indexes and files, sharply business-like in her arrangements, might pass quite elegantly as hostess to a Boston tea-party.

If Strick's direction seems to be limited to setting his camera up and letting the actors get on with it, at least this precludes the wild directorial over-emphasis of *The Savage Eye*, which would have wrecked the film; and the actors respond very capably indeed, particularly the women. Shelley Winters' beautifully witty and insidious Madame could hardly be bettered, while Ruby Dee, Joyce Jameson and Arnette Jens, as the three obliging props for her clients' fantasies, are almost as good.

TOM MILNE

## THE VICTORS

IN HIS INTRODUCTORY programme note to *The Victors* (BLC/Columbia), Carl Foreman, who wrote, produced and directed, invites us to judge the film by the highest standards. He makes it clear that this is to be regarded as his own comment on the futility and degradation of war ("a completely personal statement based on complete responsibility, and without employment of the pabulum of romance and adventure"), and that he has here tried to clarify those themes which somehow became lost or diluted in the other war films he has worked on. An honourable introduction to what is, at all events, a strongly felt film which has occupied its author for several years. In form *The Victors* is episodic, following an American infantry squad as they trudge from one European battlefield and battered town to another. In method, it is elliptical and avowedly anti-romantic. Physical and mental dirt and decay are its themes; and it pinpoints its corruptions in a manner not usually attempted in the more well-bred examples of the genre, as an embittered French officer mows down defenceless Germans; an American soldier boasts of his efficiency as a pimp; and a young homosexual camp-follower is seen vying between the Germans and the Allies.

Foreman, then, is concerned with the pity of war as well as its tragedies, and his film utilises both reality and reconstructed material: newsreel shots of some absurdities of war-time America give way to the grimy, foot-slogging world inhabited by the G.I.s. And here, in these persistent ironic contrasts, one senses a kind of unyielding didacticism which finally throws the film out of gear. Irony works best, surely, when implied with discretion, yet Foreman insists on establishing his points with a heavy thump, as each little episode edges its way towards its pre-conceived pay-off. This may seem a harsh judgment on what is, after all, a propagandist work, yet the gap between intentions and realisation remains. Take what is undoubtedly the most powerful scene: a stark military execution of a deserter set in a snowy landscape peopled by apprehensive and reluctant observers, and accompanied on the sound track by "Jingle Bells", "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas" (a particularly nostalgic choice) and Christmas carols. The excellent location shooting and juxtaposition of painful pictures and comforting sound make for an audacious effect, yet both music and cut-in close-ups are pressed home so hard that one again feels a kind of moral nudging in the ribs. (For that matter, the use of music throughout is both enterprising and dangerous. Sol Kaplan has taken many songs of the Forties, served up here as symphonic soup, and falling along the way into such embarrassing traps as the strains of "There'll Always Be an England" which accompany the G.I. as he leaves the kindly North Country family.)

Being virtually a series of vignettes, the film calls on players of



many nationalities. In the event, this failure of concentration seems to have proved a liability, since of the G.I. squad only George Peppard emerges as a character built in depth. The encounters with Jeanne Moreau (quoting Valéry to a battle-weary sergeant) and Melina Mercouri (queen of the black marketeers, with her foam baths and illicit caviare) touch on fantasy; and it seems strange that such an old Hollywood hand could have passed so awkward a passage as the meeting between G.I., Italian mother and child and Sikh soldier. As the unit trudges on, and one beautiful woman succeeds another, one cannot but feel that this particular batch of soldiers were lucky to find so many who spoke English or, as they say in the film, "just a little".

A disappointing film, then, which again brings up all those awkward questions surrounding the production of blockbusters. *The Victors* goes further in its implications than any recent commercial war film (though not half as far as, say, *Les Carabiniers*) and refuses to court popular appeal with the usual mass battle scenes. Yet its very method may have sown the seeds of its destruction. A big investment, a roster of international stars and a three-hour time span are difficult enough ingredients in any case. For a debutant director, struggling to keep his enterprise and ideas intact, the pressure and strain must have been intense. One applauds the film's gallant gestures and several piercing moments; but gestures, unhappily, prove inadequate substitutes for sustained creative judgment.

JOHN GILLETT

## In Brief

**DAVID AND LISA** (BLC/*British Lion*). Despite a low budget, *David and Lisa* is a film of considerable technical distinction which can be reviewed only on the level of its own, apparently high, aspirations. Frank Perry's confident direction, Leonard Hirschfield's lucid photography, and stunningly sincere performances from Keir Dullea and Janet Margolin, in the title roles, give the whole a transparent quality that seems both deliberate and significant—seems, in fact, to hold out the promise of layers of meaning underneath the gloss, or, at least, a genuine exploration of something. Encouraged by all this to expect so much more than the film actually achieves, one feels particularly cheated by the discovery that it has almost nothing to add to its disarmingly naïve plot.

David and Lisa are fellow patients in a special school for mentally disturbed adolescents; he suffers from a recurrent nightmare and a terror of being touched; she is schizophrenic and either talks in childish rhymes (as Lisa) or becomes mute (as Muriel). The two are drawn to each other, and as their friendship develops their condition improves. In view of David's obsessive orderliness, his recurrent dream is shown, appropriately enough, as a meticulously precise one about cutting off, with a clock hand, the heads of those who try to help him. What is less appropriate—or even credible—and what finally precludes any sort of genuinely significant development, is the certain knowledge that David's clock hand will stop short of Lisa's head. After that, it is only a matter of time until Lisa speaks normally and David, reciprocating in kind, takes her hand. So all that either of them really needed was the right partner. That, at least, is all that the film says, and it says it in the first few minutes, when boy meets girl in the entrance hall of the school, and then again in almost every other scene, including the final one. The story of David and Lisa is one in which their psychiatrist plays little part, and Howard Da Silva, a martyr to the film's hoariest cliché (the boy's expressed desire to become "a psychiatrist like you") does well to make a human being out of this truncated role.

*David and Lisa* is, in fact, the sort of problem picture that seems to affect a serious concern for its subject, while soliciting all the pat responses to misunderstood teenagers, guilt-ridden parents and dedicated medics that the American cinema is (alas) heir to. Both Frank Perry's direction and Eleanor Perry's script merely skim the surface, displaying little or no consciousness of the dark and tangled side of the subject, and Mark Lawrence's gratingly obtrusive score strikes the only really alarming note. Yet, taken simply as a superficial and easily assimilated expression of an adolescent dream, the film more or less works; so do Frank Perry's compositions, especially in isolated shots like the one of David caught like a corpse behind four candles in his parents' dining-room, immediately after his mother has removed him, against his will, from the school. By this time the school has, of course, become a thoroughly anti-parental, anti-authoritarian symbol, the voice of dissent in a



Shelley Winters in "The Balcony".

wilderness of conformity, and the audience is frankly for the inmates and against the outside world—a fact that is acutely evidenced in a scene when the children are insulted by an unsympathetic outsider at a railway station. This identification with the young patients also provides the film with its most splendid piece of wish-fulfilment—an amusing, and well-handled, scene in which David's mother visits the school and is properly shocked by what she sees of David's fellow pupils. Frank Perry's interesting talent obviously includes a considerable aptitude with actors, and one would like to see him applying it to something that is less of a tear-jerker.

ELIZABETH SUSSEX

**CRONACA FAMILIARE** (*Gala*). Valerio Zurlini's fourth feature, winner of the Golden Lion at Venice in 1962, is an elegy on the death of a young man, a debt of love to a lost brother. Closely based on Pratolini's autobiographical novel, and photographed by Rotunno in soft shades of grey, yellow, green and brown, it glows with an autumnal melancholy. Yet the mood is realistic rather than romantic, pain and sorrow being unsentimentally accepted as inevitable facts of life. The narrative examines the conscience of an aspiring writer so absorbed in a bitter struggle against poverty, ill-health and unemployment in Mussolini's Italy that he resists the claims of personal relationships and family responsibility. Finding himself increasingly enmeshed in a protective affection for his sweetly feckless younger brother, he is ultimately unwilling to spend his strength on the spiritual support without which the boy cannot survive. His brother's death finally frees him, but at a cost in grief and guilt which only he can count.

Zurlini's contemplative method, with its leisurely pace and visual beauty, its subtly evocative use of places and things, continually recalls the work of Ozu, a comparison which is confirmed by the maturity of his viewpoint, his concern with family ties and his occasional earthy humour. Some political and religious undertones fail to emerge clearly, lost perhaps in the ten minutes which have been cut from the Italian version; but there remains a portrait in depth of a sensitive, intelligent man, torn by conflicting loyalties, and a glimpse of the necessary ruthlessness that goes to the making of an artist. How much the total effect owes to the intuitive playing of the incredible Mastroianni as the writer and of Jacques Perrin as the younger brother, it is impossible to say. Here, for once, script, director and actors have achieved total accord. Only the music has moments of over-emphasis, but this is not serious enough to disturb the balance of the whole.—BRENDA DAVIES



# OFF-BROADWAY CINEMA

PETER  
DE  
ROME



Bette Davis and Warren William in "Satan Met a Lady".

**L**ACKING A NATIONAL FILM THEATRE, the film enthusiast in New York is of necessity thrown back on his own resources. And it can be a very hit or miss affair. In London, it is not too difficult to know what's on. The various clubs and societies are reasonably well documented and one can keep abreast of the scene. But in Manhattan, out-of-the-way movie houses might come up with some collector's item for a one day's showing with little or no advertising, and only word of mouth would lead one there. The obvious parallel to the NFT is, of course, the Museum of Modern Art, which has its own theatre and regularly scheduled programmes. But the policy seems to be increasingly capricious. A lengthy season of Swedish films followed by *The Complete Hitchcock*—six months of suspense, which might be just what the *Cahiers* crowd ordered, but a little wearing for anyone else. But if one needs to be something of a detective to find out about non-commercial showings off the beaten track of Broadway, at least a little probing can reveal some surprising results. There are many rich treasures being screened behind closed shutters and in non-air conditioned rooms, and many of the

faces become familiar after a few visits, so that there begins to emerge the form of a group.

Unofficial and unlikely headquarters of this group is a shabby second floor walk-up called "The Memory Shop", strategically located on unfashionable Fourth Avenue midway between Greenwich Village and the increasingly "in" lower East Side. Here, perhaps more than anywhere else, one can find a nucleus of truly *American* cineastes, knowledgeable to a frightening degree on Hollywood, which to most of them began and ended with the Thirties. Surrounded by thousands of stills, posters, press books, trade papers and magazines, the owner Marc Ricci and his assistants take on even the most abstruse enquiries with unblinking authority. With only the shakiest of index systems, requests are received—and usually filled—for stills on everyone from Gustav von Seyffertitz to Sandra Dee, on any film from *This Modern Age* (Crawford, 1931) to *This Sporting Life* (Roberts, 1963), on any special interest from ladies with long earlobes to wet women on horseback. Fellini stops by to pick up comic strips; Resnais purchases stills on Flash Gordon. One private collector, an admirer

of Lana Turner, has a complete set of stills on every picture she ever made from *They Won't Forget* to *Who's Got the Action*. He buys a copy of practically every magazine in which she is pictured, and even went so far as to see the recent *Dondi* because one of the characters mentioned her name.

Last winter, many of the visitors to "The Memory Shop" might be seen on a Saturday night making their way to a nearby coffee shop called the Café Métro, where 16 mm. versions of many forgotten films could be seen over a cup of espresso and a rare cheeseburger. An inexpensive way indeed to see *The Kiss* (Garbo's last silent), *Devil Doll* and *Mark of the Vampire* (a Tod Browning double bill) or *Meddling Women* (a 1926 rarity with Lionel Barrymore and Dagmar Godowsky). But now the Métro has been driven even deeper underground, as the police finally cracked down on these public performances without a permit.

One fact emerged very strongly from a few visits to the Métro, and that is the strange and staggering appeal of the serial. Flash Gordon, Buck Rogers, Captain Marvel, Jungle Jim are certain to draw capacity houses (even when linked together so that you see the end of every episode twice), and a four or five-hour serial session is not at all unusual. A recent issue of *Screen Facts*—"The Magazine of Hollywood's Past"—devoted a large proportion of its space to the Serials of Republic, "with a check list of all 66 Republic productions," and an article on "The Silent Serial" by William K. Everson, one of the country's leading authorities on the silent film, who last season organised a series for television called "Silents, Please".

Other specialist tastes have been served by the New Charles Theatre, where admission (if one was lucky enough to avoid running into a rumble on the way there) was granted only with a can of film, which would usually be screened to a justly derisive audience, and the Bleecker Street Cinema, which had a season of new and experimental works on Mondays at midnight.

But the most enduring cult of all is for Hollywood leading ladies of the Twenties and Thirties. And the New Yorker Theatre, far enough uptown on Broadway to be considered "off", has been the source of many delights and surprises. Early Bette Davis—smart, sophisticated, intrepid member of the social set—striding angularly through *Bad Sister*, *The Golden Arrow*, *The Girl from Tenth Avenue*, *The Rich Are Always With Us* (with the ritzy name of Malbro, holding three-way telephone conversations with George Brent and Ruth Chatterton in Paris, who tells them her "divine new Russian laundress presses my slips so that it's almost indecent to put them on"), or



*Cabin in the Cotton* (in this, flirting bravely with Richard Barthelmess—and a Southern accent—declaring: “Ah’d let ya kiss me, but ah just washed mah hair.”). And the glamorous Bette Davis of *Fashions of 1934*, wearing a series of long blonde wigs and much eye make-up, as a fashion designer who goes to Paris to pirate models to be copied on Seventh Avenue. And also in 1934, in *Fog Over Frisco*, when she received first star billing but was killed halfway through, with sister Margaret Lindsay driving all over in her roadster trying to find her, only to discover that poor Bette had been stuffed into the rumble seat.

Bette Davis was also teamed with Barbara Stanwyck in an earlier version of *So Big* (in the roles later taken by Nancy Olson and Jane Wyman respectively). Other characteristic early Stanwycks have included *Baby Face* (“She climbed her way up the ladder of love—man by man!”) and the very seedy *Night Nurse* with Joan Blondell, forever undressing and climbing into uniform, receiving a knock-out punch from villain Clark Gable (in a supporting role), but leaving town in the end with hero Ben Lyon. In the same year (1931), Bebe Daniels was starring with Ricardo Cortez in the first version of *The Maltese Falcon*, re-made and played for farce by Bette Davis and Warren William as *Satan Met a Lady* in 1936, until finally Mary Astor and Humphrey Bogart came along in 1941 to play in the definitive version.

Other rediscoveries have included the striking Ruth Chatterton, with a presence and quality all her own in the otherwise unremarkable *Frisco Jenny*, *Lilly Turner* and *Female*, and cast ever so slightly against type as a sort of Gallic Madam Butterfly and singing (with a French accent) to “My Marine”, who does a Pinkerton on her in *Paramount on Parade* in 1930. The same movie had Clara Bow leading the Paramount chorus boys in sailor suits in “I’m True to the Navy Now”. Another company, Warners, had previously come out with their own spectacular, *Show of Shows* in 1929, featuring, among others, Myrna Loy doing a Chinese song-and-dance as Li-Po-Li (and showing those usually well-observed legs), and Beatrice Lillie and Lupino Lane doing a number together.

Perhaps the most celebrated rediscovery has been Louise Brooks, and stray copies of her early American movies continue to emerge from obscurity. Several of these have been seen at the Theodore Huff Memorial Film Society, which maintains a surprisingly high standard of programmes considering the tremendous difficulty of securing prints. Theodore Huff was one of the foremost authorities on Chaplin, and the film society he started is now run by William

K. Everson. In the past months the Huff has shown *The Canary Murder Case* (which was made silent in 1929, but later dubbed with Margaret Livingston’s voice, since Miss Brooks had left Hollywood and wouldn’t go back), and *Love ’Em and Leave ’Em* (1926), the only other silent to survive apart from *Beggars of Life* and *A Social Celebrity*, which were salvaged by James Card at Eastman House. *Love ’Em and Leave ’Em* is an earlier version of the 1929 Clara Bow film *The Saturday Night Kid*. In this sound version, the bad sister role is played by Jean Arthur, but in a much more obvious fashion than the earlier Louise, and one cannot help wondering what the result would have been if Brooks and Bow had been co-starred in the 1926 version.

TV of course has been the fountain-head at which countless numbers have drunk liberally and long as “The Syncopated Clock” theme heralds another Late Late Show, and another TV ‘first’ emerges from the vaults to be dusted off in public for the first time in over 30 years. The list is endless, from the Marie Dressler-Polly Moran series: *Reducing*, *Politics*, *Prosperity*, etc., to Joan Crawford in *Montana Moon* and *Dancing Lady*. But TV has its shortcomings, not only because of the incessant commercials, but also because of wholesale butchery to make the film fit its particular time slot, and for more sinister reasons of censorship. CBS, in particular, has gained a reputation for being strangely squeamish about even the most commonplace facts of life. Suicide, for instance, seems to be out of the question. John Barrymore’s important scene was cut from *Dinner at Eight*, and characters suddenly started referring to “poor” Marsha Hunt when she vanished without explanation from *Blossoms in the Dust* and *These Glamour Girls*. However, we were allowed to see Andrea Leeds’

suicide in *Stage Door* because it was on Channel 5, and James Mason walked into the sea without any trouble on Channel 9.

Sometimes advertised movies have been summarily withdrawn for no apparent reason, and one can only assume that *Murder at the Vanities*, for instance, was not shown because Gertrude Michael, the villainess, was murdered during the big production number, “Marijuana”. This particular case seems to have occasioned the wrath of her local fan club, because the prints apparently disappeared from CBS after this, and one was later shown in conditions of maximum security at a private home in New Jersey. The same club received an unexpected and happy bonus when a librarian at the Public Library found a can marked *Just Like a Woman*, thought it was a Gloria Swanson, but discovered it was a Gertrude Michael made in England in 1938 with John Lodge. Even Vera Hrubá Ralston has her band of dedicated aficionados, who have clubbed together to buy up copies of all her old films and screen them regularly.

It is evident that there is a considerable—and growing—public for the best and worst that Hollywood has had to offer. And it is also evident that someone is falling down on his job by not organising retrospective shows of anything but the most obvious choices. Undoubtedly, too, New York could stand a shop window for recent foreign product that does not find its way into the commercial art houses. But, meanwhile, there’s a certain pleasure to be derived from peering into those dustier shop windows and occasionally from venturing inside. For there, lurking among all the bric-à-brac, long-forgotten but waiting only to be discovered anew, is the unexpected collector’s piece—the genuine Hollywood antique.



Warner's "Show of Shows", with Myrna Loy (right foreground).



# The Day of the Butterfly



THEDA BARA IN "THE UNCHASTENED WOMAN" (1925).

MISS MADRIGAL: I have painted a twining plant on the altar candles.

MRS ST. MAUGHAM: (immediately interested) But—as the candles burnt down the painting must have melted away!

MISS MADRIGAL: (ecstatic) That was the beauty of it!

ENID BAGNOLD—*The Chalk Garden*.

**O**N ALL SIDES NOW the hoary debate rages as to whether the cinema is an art. In *SIGHT AND SOUND* (Winter 1961/2) Pauline Kael made an attack on the fantasies of the art house—an attack so devastating that one began to wonder whether the art film was ever more than a figment of the critics' imagination. More recently, in "Film Clips", Arkadin referred to an article by Stuart Hampshire ("the contact of a major mind with the cinema") in which Hampshire expressed concern at the apparent failure of most critics to recognise the continuity between the art and the commercial

film. The debate continues; and the only conclusion one can draw from it is that it is easier to destroy the pretensions of the cinema-is-an-art school than to put forward the kind of values one should expect from an art film. This conclusion is reinforced by a reading of Richard Schickel's beautifully illustrated volume, *The Stars*.\*

Mr. Schickel argues that since its effect relies on certain imponderables, the cinema is not an art. "It is in the nature of the medium," he writes, "to hit below the belt. One is drawn into films in such a way that visceral responses quite overcome our critical ones." But the proposition seems very debatable. As much as it may apply to the swooning fans of a pop singer, it would be ludicrous to carry it further—to say, for instance, that *King Lear* or *Tristan and Isolde* are not works of art because a performance of them has ravished us. If visceral responses overcome our critical ones, then it's about time we revised our critical language.

Mr. Schickel believes that it is the star, above all, who

\**The Stars*, by Richard Schickel. Dial Press, New York, \$12.50.



works on us in this subliminal way. He points to the fact that no one has been able to explain adequately why a star becomes popular. He himself is convinced that no logical system will do: the choice of a star is a matter of chance. Stars can't be created (cf. the short careers of Theda Bara and Marion Davies); at the most their talent can be groomed to suit a public demand. It is this mysterious force, public demand, that conditions the choice of a star, and it is an even more mysterious force—fashion—that in turn conditions the public demand.

Having led us this far, Schickel turns in his tracks and tries to find a rational explanation for his non-rational thesis. The star is a victim of fashion, he writes, and every new star represents a change in fashion. . . . But this argument, unfortunately, can neither be proved nor disproved: find a star, and you can always trace some sociological cause for his popularity. Mr. Schickel claims that in the Fifties Grace Kelly fulfilled the public's need for cool sophistication, while Montgomery Clift satisfied a demand for a more subtle form of sensitivity. But what if Kelly and Clift had happened to be stars in the Thirties? Would a case then have to be made for predated the public's need?

Schickel also has doubts about this thesis, and tries to substantiate it with a psychological argument. He believes that stars satisfy us because we can *identify* ourselves with them. But what he means by identification is itself obscure, if not opaque. Sometimes he uses the concept as though it meant imitation: William Powell and Myrna Loy "together created an image of *marriage à la mode* which many couples, all unknowingly, still imitate." Sometimes he uses it to refer, quite simply, to the public's wish to play a part in the star's life. He refers to the "somnambulists"—Garbo, Alan Ladd, Kim Novak—of whom Valentino is the prototype. "There seemed to spring in his fans an eternal hope that one of them would awaken the real forces that slumbered (as they thought) within him." Sometimes the concept breaks down. Joan Crawford is "a star by will power . . . The fact that she shows a woman can triumph in a man's world doesn't explain her power." In other words, all that Schickel really demonstrates is that *identification* is too general a concept for his purpose. It fails to explain why we might identify ourselves with a bit player as much as with a star. More seriously, it fails to tell us anything about the stars' most important quality: magnetism.

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The writer of *The Stars* is like one of those eighteenth-century Christians who feared damnation and yet who had lost all faith in heaven. His essay is a notable act of piety towards the truism that art and fashion are incompatible. Without giving us any real idea of what he *means* by art, Schickel merely says that the cinema is not an art because it is conditioned by fashion. Films are vehicles for stars, and stars are created out of the mood of the moment. Nor is Schickel alone in holding this belief. It is often assumed that while a work of art is an attempt to discover the inherent truth of a situation, fashion is concerned with manipulating our sensations, being society's need to impress society, the wrapping on the chocolate box, the butterfly's glitter. A work of art—runs the argument—is a thing of order, governed by the laws of probability and necessity; fashion is an ephemeral thing, governed by the shifts and motions of chance. A work of art is debased in so far as its form is contaminated by the fashionable.

This antithesis conceals a fantasy seldom recognised: that art and fashion reflect the old antagonism between heaven and hell. Like heaven, a work of art is ordered and timeless: it shows us how to live the good life. Fashion, on the other hand, is the work of the devil. The devil speaks to us through

advertisements; he encourages *haute couture* to proliferate; and he is always trying to pull us down to the base world of pleasure, to a hell of violent, disconnected thrills. But Mr. Schickel lacks the nerve to follow his argument through. If he were more willing to descend into the abyss and to respect the Beelzebub of fashion, he might be less tempted to apply historical methods to a non-historical phenomenon. To describe Garbo, Ladd, Novak and Valentino as "somnambulists" is in fact to deny them those qualities which make them so different from each other. It fails to explain why Garbo, say, is a greater star than Novak.

For it is surely the case—and of this Schickel never breathes a word—that what makes stars into stars is their charismatic power. Broadly speaking, stars are people more dynamic than actors. What we want from them is a source of energy—a blaze like light or flame. The greatest stars, the cult stars like Garbo, destroy our ordered world. When we are with them we are like lovers or anarchists who rewrite history in terms of the orgasm: we live in the present. Such an influence, though, is oppressive; and it is a necessary part of our subjugation that we don't allow it to last too long. The atavistic love pact we make with our stars is that their reign must be as violent and brief as those of the ancient kings. Stars must die, be sacrificed. They must be the victims of fashion.

The beauty of the stars is not of a platonic kind; it does not fulfil an idea of permanent form. It is closer rather to Blake's formula—that beauty lies in exuberance. Beauty is not an essence but a self-consuming energy. How else can one describe the attraction of dumpy Judy Garland? There is nearly always this element of self-destruction: Marilyn Monroe and James Dean were at first distrusted by the critics; they didn't become great stars until the public sensed that they were burning themselves out. And such stars are like poets *maudits*.<sup>\*</sup> In recent years the cult of Monroe and Dean has only been equalled by the cult of Dylan Thomas. Stars, then, are misnamed. They don't twinkle like tea-trays in the sky; they are much more like meteors, destroying themselves as they orbit out of view. Would it be going too far to say that to be in the presence of great stars is to enjoy a *Gottterdammerung*?

<sup>\*</sup>cf. The part played by the London Clinic in Elizabeth Taylor's rise to super-stardom.



The fine art of interior decoration. Tomas Milian and Romy Schneider in the Visconti episode of "Boccaccio '70".



Certainly they take us far beyond the world of order and probability.

When Mr. Schickel argues that the cinema is not an art because its effects are subversive, he is in effect trying to describe hell with the language of heaven. This type of argument is familiar enough; and it usually arises when an art is at its most vigorous. Many a proper person regarded the drama in the sixteenth century or the novel in the nineteenth century with suspicion. Should such rude, such *popular* activities be taken seriously? These critics were only willing to be serious when the drama and the novel had lost a great deal of their force. The arts are dangerous at the best of times, and the orderly mind is rightly afraid of them. So it may be a bad sign that critics are debating the question as to whether the cinema is an art. One wonders whether its vitality, the prodigious vitality of the past fifty years, is beginning to fail. All the same, as an optimist I like to think that this question is being debated for another, more peculiar reason.

\* \* \*

In general, and before the New Wave forced them to question their assumptions, the cinema-is-an-art school of critics believed that the art film should conform to the dictates of social realism. The cinema, they believed, should document the actual: Lumière, and not Méliès, was the true pioneer. The world is not a flux; history gives it meaning. The great directors—a De Sica in *Bicycle Thieves* or an Eisenstein in *Potemkin*—ordered the actual in such a way that it revealed the dialectic of history. What these critics didn't emphasise was that the actual, be it an empty street or a grazing horse, is in itself timeless. Once the empty street or grazing horse is put on celluloid it becomes an image: the street will always remain empty and the horse will graze on into eternity. "The essential character of the image," writes Alain Robbe-Grillet, "is its presentness. Whereas literature has a whole gamut of grammatical terms, one might say that on the screen verbs are always in the present tense. By its nature what we see on the screen is in the *act of happening* . . ."

But can an act of happening be made into an art? The disciples of *cinéma-vérité* think so, and so do some of the New Wave directors. What Alain Resnais, Agnès Varda and

Jean-Luc Godard have realised is that the cinema is an art of the present. As in André Malraux' *Museum Without Walls*, the past for them is without history; it is nothing more than a variety of styles. But an art which is always present exists out of time: "now" is never if you try to pin it down. This discovery is liberating. An art without a past is an art without traditions, and so without conventions. In his *Letter from Siberia* Chris Marker is able to pilfer styles from wherever he wishes, from the cartoon or the travelogue or the silent film. Such freedom gives Marker's work an added sense of immediacy: the man confronts us here and now. And this use of the essay form is similar to the improvisations of Godard and Truffaut. We have no way of defining the formal aspects of this art. Mutability has become more than a theme; it has entered into the very structure. If there is a form, it is ironically used. In *Marienbad* the form is arbitrarily imposed, like a smart packaging—and yet this in no way detracts from the film's purpose or achievement.

The language of heaven is inadequate, then: such criteria as probability and necessity do not apply to the new art film. We must appreciate it as we would the stars, by its ability to be vivid, urgent, exciting. Like the stars the new art film is governed by chance. It is no longer an art which works through conventions—i.e., conveniences that can be used. It is unmannered, untutored, an art of the fashionable.

The orderly critic might well be shocked by this unholy alliance. Art and fashion have come together?—Surely not! And yet, taking the devil's part, I think one can answer the orderly critic's objections on at least two counts. "Surely a work of art should portray a vision of life?" the orderly critic cries, rolling his eyes up to heaven, much as his literary counterpart does when you remind him that the first aim of a novel is to be *novel*. "Surely it should have a sense of history?" Well, yes . . . but what if the vision of life is one that rejects a sense of history? Nowadays many people believe that history is more or less bunk; that one learns little enough from one's own experience, let alone from the more complex behaviour of nations. ("The only wisdom we can hope to acquire is the wisdom of humility: humility is endless.") The time experience of the present age, writes Arnold Hauser in *The Social History of Art*, "consists above all in an awareness of the present.

From Shirley Temple (left, in urgent conversation with C. Aubrey Smith in "Wee Willie Winkie") to Jeanne Moreau (right, as the passionate gambler of "La Baie des Anges").





Everything topical, contemporary, bound together in the present moment, is of special significance to man today. The mere fact of simultaneity acquires a new meaning."

Again, the orderly critic might remind us of the connection between art and morality: how the serious film, either directly or indirectly, should show us how to live the good life. In the language of heaven, art concerns itself with moral problems, with the tangles of will and impulse in the world. But the devil's answer to this Protestantism would be pretty harsh, I think. Films aren't novels, and it is not in their nature to provide us with this sort of insight. A detailed verbal analysis is needed to explore the interplay of conscience and consciousness. Yet Antonioni, we are told, is a moralist of this kind. He sets out to show us how the individual, confronted by his unpredictable impulses and finding his moral vocabulary breaking down, drifts through life in a state of bewilderment.

In fact, Antonioni's work seems banal if we see him as a moralist. His psychological descriptions are far too simple: feelings are not as tenuous or as brittle as he makes out. His picture of the will struggling in a world of resisting objects is too schematic; it fails to give us that richness of experience from which we can reasonably make moral inferences. In other words, we shall be disappointed if we go to these films with the Protestant's phrasing of the question: "In what way do they show us how to live the good life?" However, we are not disappointed. Antonioni answers this question—but he answers it in a manner which Protestants are liable to chaff at. Epicureans, on the other hand, will be highly pleased by this answer, since Antonioni's idea of the good life is very *dolce* indeed. The luxurious décors and man-made landscapes of his world remind us that we never had it so good. Antonioni, the devil whispers, provides us with a guide on how men may behave in the affluent society; he is the Virgil who leads us through hell.

In a sense, then, these films enter the domain of the novel, which, as Lionel Trilling says, is concerned with "a culture's hum and buzz of implication. The whole evanescent context . . . hinted at by the arts of dress and decoration, sometimes by tone, gesture, emphasis or rhythm . . ." In part, we go to see *The Eclipse* to see how Monica Vitti dresses or decorates her flat, or to find out what she is reading.

\* \* \*

During the Thirties, people looked to Hollywood for a lead on how to use their knives and forks, and on how to dress their children. What they were given was Shirley Temple. Now the art film directors are making the fashionable films, and the question is: do we get more than Monica Vitti or Jeanne Moreau?

In some of the art films the takeover does not seem to be much of an improvement. Claude Chabrol, for instance, has done little more than transpose Manhattan to the Left Bank. In *Les Cousins* he aped the fashionable tricks of *Rear Window*; and in *A Double Tour*, when he took this style to an extreme, the mannerisms remained mere mannerisms. Those languid tracking shots round the fish bowl were about as meaningful as the advertisements for a fashion store; they just did not live up to the pretensions of the script.

Such films remind us that an art of the fashionable is liable to collapse into pornography when the trappings dominate and the human beings are reduced to objects. I am not sure that Joseph Losey always escapes this charge. The version of *Eve* shown in London may not have been the one he wanted us to see, but even so what we had of it was so swamped by incidental music and décor that one found it impossible to guess what it was all about. Not *Eve*, surely? Like John Mortimer, or for that matter Ian Fleming, Losey creates many of his effects by keeping his eye on brand names. Yet in *Eve* his eye appears to have been a little blurred. Billie Holiday records may be in character, but no contemporary courtesan worth her salt would risk her reputation on reading something so old hat as the *Poesie di T. S. Eliot*. Robert Lowell



Wendy Craig, Dirk Bogarde and James Fox in "The Servant".

perhaps, but *Eliot* . . . ? The extent of Losey's failure here can be measured by the success of his most recent film, *The Servant*, where he uses the fashionable most cannily. A somewhat unusual plot is made plausible by its location, in a precisely described Chelsea maisonette. The director knows so much about the *moeurs* of his characters that we are willing (for some time, at least) to believe in the possibility of his theme.

All the same, this naturalism (so often a form of pornography) is not in itself enough. In the light of Antonioni's work it appears as very slight. Antonioni *does* hold the balance between people and their trappings, however precarious this balance sometimes becomes. Monica Vitti, for instance, acts both as subject and object. As an object she is beautiful to behold, and the camera lingers over her possessively. As a subject she suffers, has problems. Although these problems are often treated as though they were straight out of a woman's magazine, they do make her human. The ambiguity is always there. Are Piero and Vittoria (in *The Eclipse*) created by their flats, or is it the other way round? Is *La Notte* an elegy to a dying relationship, or is it really a paean to modern Milan?

Antonioni has created a new cinematic language (perfected in *The Eclipse*), whose vocabulary is made up of objects. He forces us to *resee* aeroplanes and street corners, blocks of flats and sports cars, so that we observe them as though for the first time. Yet the effect is of a continuous lunar landscape. Is this a deliberate comment on the modern world, or is it merely an accidental product of the way that Antonioni looks at the world? It is difficult, perhaps impossible, to say. Antonioni is pre-eminently an aesthete. His art is urban—that is, he creates an order out of already created things, such as mushroom towers and elegant rooms, and not out of raw nature. He creates fashions out of existing fashions, and his style depends on the art of engineers, architects and fashion designers. Because of this his work is hermetic, self-enclosed. At the same time, he is preoccupied by the messiness of human beings, by their inability, above all, to live up to their beautiful surroundings.

*Lasciate ogni speranza voi ch'entrate* . . . Better to reign in Hell, then serve in Heav'n . . . Sad defiance, pleasurable melancholia: these contradictory emotions set the tone of the



later films. Like Paolo and Francesca, Antonioni's lovers try to make a heaven of their hell. Caught up in the world of fashion, they attempt to forge a style out of a despair. The old religious conflicts are fought out in secular terms.

The predicament is not theirs alone. The extent to which fashion plays a part in our lives is impossible to compute, because its influence is so subversive. Artifice surrounds us, closes us in. The "natural" is already lost behind the stereotypes of advertising. A walk across the Sussex Downs reminds us irresistibly of a certain brand of cigarettes. At the best, we see nature in terms of RCA graphics. The pressure is strong, and it is unlikely any director will quite escape it. Even so "natural" a film as *Jules et Jim* interests us not as a study of an Ibsenite woman, but in the way a magnificent travel poster would: why not try the Bavarian lakes next summer? The advertising agencies should really cash in on that notion of *mise en scène*. . . . Indeed, I have heard it murmured in some quarters that it is difficult to demonstrate the superiority of this film to a high-class advertisement. At the most one can say that it provides us with a disinterested account of the good life: it shows us the limitation of the product.

It is easy to speak with hindsight, but our present art for art's sake movement appears to have been inevitable. Directors seem to have been driven into an art of the fashionable. But are they aware of this? I'm not sure. Unlike some of the pop artists, they don't seem to be conscious of how far their work is conditioned by the fashionable; they don't seem to be ironic about it.

Still, a sense of irony might undermine their enthusiasm, and this in turn would debilitate their work. For the art of the fashionable, however dubious it may seem, has revitalised the cinema. Luchino Visconti often appears to be no more than a splenetic interior decorator; yet the one moment when his episode in *Boccaccio '70* sprang to life was when Romy Schneider draped herself in a Chanel suit. It is on such epiphanies that the cinema as an art depends. At its best, fashion does supply us with a sense of the vivid, and this, possibly, is the most valuable quality in a work of art. It reminds us that not the fruit of the experience but the experience itself is the end, and that to burn always with a hard gemlike flame, and to maintain this ecstasy, is the aim of all good films.



## BOOK REVIEWS

**INDIAN FILM**, by Erik Barnouw and S. Krishnaswamy. Illustrated. (Columbia University Press, 56s.)

IT IS PERHAPS A TRIBUTE to this book that it does nothing to allay the Westerner's worst fears about the Indian cinema, with its long record of mass-produced trash aimed at a huge and indiscriminating audience for whom the cinema is, by necessity, an amalgam of all the arts. The authors' description of the industry's beginnings includes rare information on a number of early pioneers (like Mr. D. G. Phalke, roughly contemporary with Hepworth), whose excursions into Indian mythology sparked off a lucrative genre which reached its heyday (and its nadir) in the '30s and '40s after sound added the possibility of music and dance. Some of the titles uncovered by the authors, with their magical and supernatural effects clearly influenced by both Méliès and European spectacles, incite curiosity and might stand re-viewing.

But, in general, the story is one of massive industrial speculation geared to production in a dozen languages, and also subjected to all kinds of censorship restrictions, bureaucratic uncertainties, and an unusually high turnover in production companies. The book, in fact, is a treasure trove for anyone interested in trade legislation, governmental edicts, and the weird thought processes of those self-imposed guardians of public morals with whom the Indian industry is beset. The writers are particularly eloquent in their investigations into popular tastes and the stranglehold "playback" songs exerted on the public, until the musical pundits decided that they were destroying classical culture and endeavoured to banish them from All-India Radio. Songs and stars have been the cornerstones of the commercial Indian film; and the book confirms that those flashing heroes and winsome heroines are harder-worked than their equivalents in any other country, often taking part in half-a-dozen films at once and setting special problems for the luckless production managers.

This, approximately, was the Indian scene before the arrival of Satyajit Ray. In one of the book's best chapters, the authors provide useful information on Ray's early activities with the Calcutta Film Society (again frustrated by all kinds of censorship, tax and import restrictions), the one-man revolution he effected with his first films, and the misunderstandings and opposition which still harass him today. Throughout the book, the development of the industry is related to both the national and international scene. The widening of the Indian cinema's horizons over the last ten years inevitably led to increased interest from overseas; and some of the unhappy results (*India 57*, *Pardesi*, *Nine Hours to Rama*) are caustically documented here. Yet, without being unduly optimistic, the authors display a cautious faith in the future and its possibilities, even if most of their hopes are pinned, not surprisingly, on Ray and the Bengali school he has initiated. Despite the vagaries of government and the worst kind of commercial exploitation, the real history of the Indian film is only just beginning.

JOHN GILLET

**MOVEMENT IN TWO DIMENSIONS**. By Olive Cook. Illustrated. (Hutchinson, 30s.)

**LE BOULEVARD DU CINEMA à l'époque de Georges Méliès**. By Jacques Deslandes. Illustrated. (Editions du Cerf, Paris, 6.30 F.)

THE PRE-HISTORY AND EARLY history of the cinema still offer large and fascinating opportunities for original research, of which neither Miss Cook nor Monsieur Deslandes seem to have taken enough advantage. Miss Cook traces the pre-history with an emphasis on the spectacular rather than the scientific forbears of the cinema. She

*An art of the fashionable: Françoise Prévost in "Il Mare".*



traces optical shows from early mirror magic, through panoramas and peepshows, shadow plays and magic lanterns, and ends with a quick look at the various nineteenth-century applications of the principle of the persistence of vision which ended in the *Cinématographe*. She has produced a very attractive and pleasantly written book which would make a delightful present for anyone who does not want much in the way of comprehensive or original information.

Her selection of history is very erratic, giving quite undue emphasis to certain historical figures at the expense of others (to select only one example: Cellini's experience with the Sicilian magician seems infinitely less significant than the fascinating Robertson, whose *fantasmagoria* is dismissed in a word or two). In her account of the invention of the cinema, which centres on the incomprehensible and clearly misprinted assertion that "It was the study of this instrument (i.e. Rudge's lantern) which enabled Friese-Greene to produce in 1899 the first practical camera and projector for use with a perforated celluloid band," Miss Cook shows herself quite unaware of the admirable research that has gone on in the past decade or so, both here and in France and America, into the confused developments of the period. Significantly, her bibliography mentions no publication on cinema history since the war, apart from the 1963 brochure of the Barnes Museum of Cinematography at St. Ives, and quite ignores the enthusiastic researches of Georges Sadoul and the rather more scientific ones that have centred on the Kodak Museum at Harrow.

Perhaps most disappointing are Miss Cook's chapters on the magic lantern. She obviously loves lantern slides and has examined a great many; but she restricts herself mostly to evocative description of slides and shows. A date or two to guide collectors faced with identifying even the most common subjects would have been a help. For the most part Miss Cook leaves this—her favourite—field as untouched as before she began.

Monsieur Deslandes' book is not much more useful. He too best enjoys impressionist evocation of the old days, and his "Petit Guide à l'Usage du Cinéophile Sentimentale", recalling Parisian scenes of cinema history, is the most engaging part of the book. His account of the career of Georges Méliès does not add much to already published sources, apart from a rather interesting catalogue of Méliès' stage illusions. Monsieur Deslandes' occasional ideas—about the connection between Méliès' magic and his films, for

example, or his rejection of the idea that the Charity Bazaar fire of 1897 really prejudiced the progress of the newly invented cinema—are worried over with the sort of aggressive, possessive pride which only a French writer could arouse in himself.

DAVID ROBINSON

**INTERNATIONAL FILM GUIDE 1964**, edited by Peter Cowie. (The Tantivy Press, London, 7s. 6d.) Excellent value at a very reasonable price is offered in this pocket-sized volume, which contains a range of information formerly to be found only in expensive and inaccessible reference books. Its worst weakness is the lack of a comprehensive index, which in view of the arbitrary arrangement of the sections, means that much of the content is virtually lost except to the browser with time to spare. Since the book's value rests largely on its reference material there does seem to be rather too much personal opinion: the film and book reviews, for instance, might be more appropriately housed in a critical journal. The same applies broadly to the "directors of the year" section—filmographies seem suitable here, evaluations less so. Stills take up a lot of space and are not at their best in this format; some of the foreign sections are unnecessarily scrappy; and too many films are mentioned without any indication of their availability. Certain sections are printed in both French and English, but it is difficult to see what principle has been followed in selecting them. On the other hand the Festival, Art Cinema and Cinema School sections are admirable, providing information never before available in an English publication.—BRENDA DAVIES

#### BOOKS RECEIVED

FILM REVIEW. Edited by Maurice Speed. (Macdonald, 25s.)

INTERNATIONALE FILMBIBLIOGRAPHIE 1952–1962. Compiled by H. P. Manz. (Verlag Hans Rohr, Zurich, Fr. 9.)

JULES AND JIM. By Henri-Pierre Roche. (John Calder, 22s.)

THE LONELY LIFE. By Bette Davis. (Macdonald, 30s.)

PHOTOGRAPHY IN COLOUR. By Edward S. Bomback. (Fountain Press, 17s. 6d.)

A PORTRAIT OF JOAN. By Joan Crawford, with Jane Kesner Ardmore. (Muller, 21s.)

ROMANCE AMERICAINE. By Henri Agel. (Editions du Cerf, Paris, 10.80 Fr.)

SCREEN WORLD 1963. Edited by Daniel Blum. (Chilton, 68s.)

## CORRESPONDENCE

### Independents and the Circuits

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND

SIR,—May I be allowed to comment on your article (Autumn issue) dealing with the Trading and Practices Report drawn up by a sub-committee for the Cinematograph Films Council?

It is true that, at present, no British first feature film stands a chance of recovering its cost unless it secures a booking on one or other of the circuits controlled by the Rank and ABC combines. This because, although the two circuits together number only 651 cinemas (total, countrywide, 2,429), their seating capacity represents 41.5 per cent of the total, an increase in strength and bargaining power of over ten per cent in ten years. And, one should add, by and large, mostly the best seats in the best situations.

The effect of this is to place the choice of the country's film entertainment in the hands of two men: the film bookers for the two major circuits. It is a Godlike position with, not only the right to determine what millions may be allowed to see in the course of any one week, but power of life and death over the work and future of the film-maker himself. Now I am quite prepared to accept that both men concerned are good husbands, solid citizens and kind to animals. They may even be Godfearing. But Godlike they certainly are not, as the briefest acquaintanceship will reveal. To place so much power in so few hands then, is, in my belief, unfair to the men themselves, harmful to the future of British production, and restrictive in its effects on the entertainment offered to the public.

The Federation of British Film Makers, in its submission to the Cinematograph Films Council, suggested that, for booking purposes only, the circuits should be fragmented, with no one man booking

for more than twenty-five cinemas (five, in my view, would be better!), on a local or regional basis. This would, in effect, return to the provinces the right (a right once possessed when competition still existed in the film world), to choose films considered most suitable to the taste and needs of local patrons. I do not claim for this idea (nor, I imagine, would the F.B.F.M.) that the quality of decision would be any higher than under the present system. But the possibility of being able to place one's eggs in, say, fifty baskets instead of the present two, (the choice of image, I hasten to assure the reader, has no other significance than the one I hope it immediately suggests!) would certainly give the film-maker better odds for his investment.

The C.F.C. report rejects this proposition. The reason? Finance for production would not be forthcoming unless the two combine circuits existed to provide assurance that investment could be recovered. Or, as you put it, any reduction in the power of the two circuits would undermine "that 'stability' which ensures some continuity of production." The quote marks are mine!

I do not think this is true. Indeed, it is probably the reverse of the truth. There is a large and, in terms of quality, most important segment of British production financed quite independently of the two combines, and with no assurance of a booking on either of the two circuits. Films like *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, *Only Two Can Play*, *The L-Shaped Room*, *Heavens Above!* are examples, even if conspicuously favourable examples. There are others, with not so obvious public appeal, which have been obliged to stand in line for as long as a year in the hope of a circuit booking. Why do they stand in line? Because they are independently financed. During the weary months of waiting, with no guarantee at the end that they will get a circuit booking, the makers have seen "plum" dates in the year given to films in which the combines have been financially involved. *Punch and Judy Man*, *80,000 Suspects* and *Tamahine* are conspicuous examples of a rather sadder character.

The dominance of the two combine circuits, then, does not encourage the flow of capital into the independent sector of production, but rather the reverse. With, at one time, films representing an investment of over one million pounds, having to wait for



anything up to one year for a circuit booking, new production projects have been postponed or even abandoned.

This situation, of course, may well satisfy Rank and ABC. If independent production collapses they will have in their grasp not just the largest slice but the whole cake! Not just the cinemas and distribution and laboratories and studios—but, the not unimportant film-makers themselves!

I take leave to doubt whether such a state of affairs is a healthy one. Indeed, if this is what the present Conservative Government is prepared to endorse as "free enterprise", then, it seems to me, the sooner an alternative force introduces "government interference", the better.

Fragmentation of the circuits for booking purposes, of course, would not solve the problem of combine domination. Divorcement of production from exhibition would be required to achieve this necessary end. But it might ease the situation for the producer, give him a better chance of getting his film booked in some cinemas rather than none and, as I hope I have shown, would not have the discouraging effect on finance the C.F.C. report asserts.

The report, you say, "throws a bright light on the problem". How sad that at the end it should turn off the switch!

Yours faithfully,  
ROY BOULTING

London, S.W.3.

### The Real Avant-Garde?

SIR,—Though those of us in America who are concerned with the emerging vision of the avant-garde cinema have learned to expect nothing in the way of pertinent criticism on that mode of film-making from SIGHT AND SOUND, the irresponsibility of Mr. Tom Milne's comment on "The Real Avant-Garde" in your recent issue should not go unanswered. I refer specifically to the opening paragraph in which the author cites two films, one (*Meshe of the Afternoon* by Maya Deren) made twenty years ago and the other (*Desistfilm* by Stan Brakhage) only a decade old, as evidence that "things haven't changed a bit in the avant-garde world since the late Twenties in France, when technical trickery became an end in itself . . ."

Balderdash! As a practising critic, I can sympathise with Mr. Milne's problem of having to pad the first few paragraphs of his article with bits of history, humour, and theory before he could feel ready and/or free to say what he really wanted to say. Yet when such a passage of steam-gathering stands as the *only* statement on a vital mode of film-making published in recent years by a leading film periodical, I become irritated. I doubt that Mr. Milne really does know what avant-garde means, despite the confidence of his first paragraph; for I cannot believe that his love of pigeon-holing the avant-garde would have been quite so blind if he had seen such films as Stan Brakhage's *Dog Star Man*, or Jack Smith's *Flaming Creatures*, or Gregory Markopoulos' *Twice a Man*, or Bruce Conner's *Cosmic Ray*, to name just a few very different and very beautiful films.

Yours faithfully,  
P. ADAMS SITNEY,  
Editor, *Filmwise*

Hartford, Connecticut.

### Camera Credits

SIR,—I am pleased to see in the Guide to Current Films, two films I photographed—*Angel Baby* and *Studs Lonigan*. Some other films of mine are: *Stakeout on Dope Street*, *Savage Eye*, *Hoodlum Priest*, *Face in the Rain*, *Shadow and the Sea* (Brazil), *America, America* and *The Best Man*.

The above may appear as an unsolicited commercial, which is my intention. For years I have worked on the fringes and behind the scenes because of archaic union restrictions. Credit and discussion of my contributions to these films had to be clouded or hushed. Now if my work deserves criticism or recognition, I would like to have it.

Yours faithfully,  
HASKELL WEXLER

Hollywood 28, California.

### It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World

WE WORKED TWO AND A HALF YEARS AS HARD AND AS WELL AS WE COULD ON THE STORY AND SCRIPT OF THE KRAMER PICTURE AND NOW YOUR AUTUMN ISSUE KNOCKS IT SPECULATIVELY BEFORE YOUR CORRESPONDENT HAS EVEN SEEN A REEL OF IT STOP SURELY THIS IS TO SET A NEW STANDARD OF CRITICAL INTEGRITY WE GIVE UP.—WILLIAM AND TANIA ROSE, Brighton.

### WHOSE CRISIS?

*continued from page 28*

of what can still be done abroad, even in crisis-ridden industries, on very low budgets. Lina Wertmüller made *I Basilischi* for less than £20,000, by the time-honoured Italian method of a return to the village street. Godard's *Les Carabiniers* puts its investment into talent: here is the rare film that can afford to look as though it were made in someone's back yard. Is there any real reason to think that Britain could not have an indigenous art-house cinema of this kind, if its directors had the extremist creative passion and reckless obstinacy that go with making pictures in such conditions?

This, however, is by the way. An art-house circuit, on the lines some specialised distributors have envisaged, remains a dream of the future. The financial debate continues elsewhere, in the territory of the two big circuits; and the crisis mood is bound to suggest some immediate catastrophe, rather than a progressive worsening of a situation which has for years been uncertain. But the other crisis remains: a conviction among some producers that what held the screen a decade ago ought still to hold it today, that the circuits owe them a living. For the moment, it is essential to keep the studios open, and to provide incentive rather than discouragement to independent production. But it is also, surely, up to the producers to reassess their own position in terms of what is commercially workable and creatively worth doing.

### LONDON FESTIVAL: SHORT FILMS

*continued from page 13*

using up its reserves: the many similar variations on the dangerous child-in-war theme are revealing. But the animated film is so far from exhausting its reserves that there is an exhilaration in the fact that its limits can't yet be measured. Technically, too, it is much more lively and versatile: it doesn't have to break with so many traditions in its search for new ways and means. Cartoons owe us no explanations: they can gloriously hail the anarchistic and the irrational, which a live action film would need an elaborate concept to put across. It seems as though the world in all its confusions will gradually find itself living up to the level of the cartoon: to the hallucinatory pessimism of *Labyrinth*, or the urban gloom of *Everyday Chronicle*, or the way Pintooff's hilarious Jewish materialist in *The Critic* manhandles the pseudo-sophistication of highfalutin 'Art'. Even the overdone subject of war and peace can be newly worked over in *The Game* or *The Red Stain*; and in *Automania 2000* Halas and Batchelor have made their best film for some years. This again is a picture about reality turned to absurdity. Something we experience every day; and something that, in their own peculiar way, Mr. Magoo and all the others can tell us as much about as, say, Umberto D.

ROBERT VAS

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 BLC/BRITISH LION for *The Trial*, *The Caretaker*, *The Balcony*.  
 BLC/COLUMBIA for *Dr. Strangelove*, *The Cardinal*, *The Lady from Shanghai*.  
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# A GUIDE TO CURRENT FILMS

Films of special interest to SIGHT AND SOUND readers are denoted by one, two, three or four stars

- \*ABYSSES, LES (Gala)** Two housemaid sisters terrorise their employers, reduce their house to a shambles, and finally murder them. Intense and looming with significance about social relationships today, but muddled, stazy and often unfortunately risible. (Francine Bergé, Colette Bergé, Paul Bonifas; director, Nico Papatakis.)
- \*\*BALCONY, THE (BLC/British Lion)** Genet's play about the brothel as dream factory, brought to the screen by way of Ben Maddow's rather gingerly adaptation. Astringent playing from Shelley Winters and her young ladies; direction carefully unsensational, but also a bit short on imagination. (Peter Falk, Ruby Dee; director, Joseph Strick.) *Reviewed.*
- \*BLACK FOX (Contemporary)** Oscar-winning American documentary on the life and times of Hitler, compiled from stills, references to paintings, etc., as well as actuality film. Capable journey over much-travelled ground, with commentary given a bit extra by Marlene Dietrich's delivery. (Director, Louis Clyde Stoumen.)
- BYE BYE BIRDIE (BLC/Columbia)** Almost tuneless adaptation of the stage musical, its pop-craze satire diluted to appease the teenage trade. Leading players a bit over-stretched, but there is a nice piece of supporting comedy from Maureen Stapleton. (Dick Van Dyke, Janet Leigh, Ann-Margret; director, George Sidney. Technicolor, Panavision.)
- \*\*\*CARDINAL, THE (BLC/Columbia)** Otto Preminger's anthology of all the problems confronting contemporary Catholicism is a victory of form over content: if *mise en scène* means anything, this is it. Fine performance from Romy Schneider, magnificent Shamroy lensing, debut of new star, John Huston. (Tom Tryon, Burgess Meredith, Carol Lynley. Technicolor, Panavision.) *Reviewed.*
- CLEOPATRA (Fox)** The film which makes it all too apparent that with £14 million, any amount of assorted talent, extravagant locations, and a plot-line sanctified by Shaw and Shakespeare, it's still possible to make a pretty dull movie. (Elizabeth Taylor, Richard Burton, Rex Harrison; director, Joseph L. Mankiewicz. DeLuxe Color, Todd-AO.)
- COUNTERFEITERS, THE (Gala)** A Simenon story about a group of petty crooks who call "The Boss" out of retirement to help them plan a bank note forgery, and live to rue the day. Plods a little when Jean Gabin, as the heart-warming master criminal, isn't on screen. (Martine Carol, Bernard Blier; director, Gilles Grangier.)
- \*\*DAVID AND LISA (BLC/British Lion)** Psychoanalysis U.S.A. Quite appealing in a doggy way, with nice performances by Keir Dullea and Janet Margolin as the mixed-up kids, and especially, Howard Da Silva as the psychiatrist. (Director, Frank Perry.) *Reviewed.*
- \*\*\*DR. STRANGELOVE (BLC/Columbia)** Stanley Kubrick's dazzlingly clever account of what *might* happen if someone pressed the button. Makes most so-called satire look juvenile, by remaining diamond hard, giving no quarter to anyone, and preserving a shiver behind every laugh. (Peter Sellers, George C. Scott, Sterling Hayden.) *Reviewed.*
- \*\*FAMILY DIARY (Gala)** Mastroianni as a poverty-stricken journalist tells the pathetic story of his younger brother, whose spirit has been fatally undermined by a too-protective upbringing. Very slow and a little morbid, but evocatively directed with an artist's eye for colour. (Jacques Perrin, Salvo Randone; director, Valerio Zurlini. Technicolor.) *Reviewed.*
- \*55 DAYS AT PEKING (Rank)** Story of the Boxer Rebellion and siege of the Peking legations, rethought by Samuel Bronston, Nicholas Ray and Philip Yordan as a U.N. allegory. Chinese court and British embassy share the English actors; Charlton Heston and Ava Gardner stand in for the great powers. Fine fireworks. (David Niven, Flora Robson. Technicolor, Technirama 70.)
- FUN IN ACAPULCO (Paramount)** Elvis Presley tries another sporting role, this time as a trapeze artist with a complex who cures his fear while high-diving in Acapulco. Lashings of Latin American songs and atmosphere can't cure a lifeless script. (Ursula Andress, Paul Lukas, Elsa Cardenas; director, Richard Thorpe. Technicolor.)
- HAUNTING, THE (M-G-M)** That Old Dark House resuscitated, with anthropologist Richard Johnson investigating ghostly manifestations; Claire Bloom (rather good) and Julie Harris as the psychic ladies who attract the evil powers. Lots of zoom and thump, but little else. (Russ Tamblyn; director, Robert Wise. Panavision.)
- \*HOW THE WEST WAS WON (M-G-M/Cinerama)** Bulging with stars and shivering at the seams, the first Cinerama story film mixes eye-catching spectacle with slabs of static narrative. Ford's Civil War sequence comes closest to taming the giant screen. (Debbie Reynolds, James Stewart, Carroll Baker; directors, Henry Hathaway, John Ford, George Marshall. Technicolor.)
- \*IT'S A MAD, MAD, MAD, MAD WORLD (United Artists)** Three-hour feast of repetitive fun, consisting mainly of car chases and crashes, with a few beatings-up thrown in; but the interminable cast list provides some actor-spotting fun. Single projector Cinerama without the joins, but with curved screen now offering bizarre distortions. (Spencer Tracy, Milton Berle, Ethel Merman, Mickey Rooney; director, Stanley Kramer. Technicolor, Ultra Panavision presented in Cinerama.)
- \*KNIGHTS OF THE TEUTONIC ORDER (Contemporary)** Long, well-upholstered and highly coloured spectacle dealing with the Poles' battle against the Teutonic Knights. Veteran director Aleksander Ford knows his way round the battle scenes and fills out the rest with handsome helpings of sex, sadism and, in places, tedium. (Ursula Modrzynska, Grazyna Staniszewska, Andrzej Szalawski. Eastman Colour, Dyaliscope.)
- \*\*LAWRENCE OF ARABIA (BLC/Columbia)** David Lean, Sam Spiegel and Robert Bolt's massive reconstruction of the desert campaigns. Impeccably academic direction and a genuine response to the setting, but the whole thing has rather the air of a blockbuster in search of a hero. (Peter O'Toole, Alec Guinness, Jack Hawkins, Anthony Quinn. Technicolor, Super Panavision 70.)
- \*\*LEATHER BOYS, THE (BLC/British Lion)** Another of Sidney Furie's sympathetic forays into teenage life: newly-married husband (Colin Campbell) deserts flashy wife (Rita Tushingham) for sexually ambiguous friend (Dudley Sutton, excellent). The horrors of a holiday camp honeymoon are overdone, but the wit crackles and the motor-cycling scenes are shot with real bravura.
- \*\*\*LEOPARD, THE (Fox)** Lampedusa's novel about Sicily at the time of the Risorgimento, filmed by Visconti as a rich picture-book to an accompaniment of penetrating, if occasionally obscure, social-political dialogue. English version by all accounts not a patch on the original, but it all looks very splendid. (Burt Lancaster, Alain Delon, Claudia Cardinale. DeLuxe Color, CinemaScope.) *Reviewed.*
- \*\*\*\*MURIEL (United Artists)** Alain Resnais and Jean Cayrol in Boulogne. Incredibly splendid: go and see for yourself. (Delphine Seyrig, Jean-Pierre Kérien, Jean-Baptiste Thierrée. Eastman Colour.) *Reviewed.*
- \*\*NUTTY PROFESSOR, THE (Paramount)** Jerry Lewis as a timid college professor transformed by a Jekyll and Hyde potion into a pop-singing teenage idol. Inventive and very funny, particularly in its early scenes, though it runs out of steam after the halfway mark. (Stella Stevens; director, Jerry Lewis. Technicolor.)
- \*\*\*SERVANT, THE (Warner-Pathé)** Losey and Pinter explore the situation of a rich young man first cosseted, then corrupted, by his implacable manservant. Dirk Bogarde's best performance ever; direction grips like a lobster-claw. (James Fox, Wendy Craig, Sarah Miles.) *Reviewed.*
- STITCH IN TIME, A (Rank)** Christmas cheer from Norman Wisdom as a butcher's assistant determined to help suffering humanity, bringing helpful chaos to a large hospital and comfort to a little girl orphaned and shocked in a car crash. (Edward Chapman, Jeannette Sterke, Jerry Desmonde; director, Robert Asher.)
- \*\*STRANGER, THE (Grand National)** A quiet stranger arrives in a small Southern town on the eve of racial integration in the local school, and proceeds to stir up trouble. Tough, timely, atmospheric; flawed by final melodramatics. (William Shatner, Jeanne Cooper; director, Roger Corman.)
- TAKE HER, SHE'S MINE (Fox)** American teenager in Europe, exposed to college beatniks and suave painters, gets her father involved with those wicked French. Nice colour and sets. (James Stewart, Sandra Dee, Philippe Forquet; director, Henry Koster. DeLuxe Color, CinemaScope.)
- THRILL OF IT ALL, THE (Rank)** Comedy from the Ross Hunter stable, with Doris Day throwing her home into disorder by becoming a star of soap commercials, and denouement, following much obstetric chatter, in which a baby is born during a traffic jam. (James Garner, Arlene Francis; director, Norman Jewison. Technicolor Print.)
- \*TOYS IN THE ATTIC (United Artists)** Lillian Hellman's steamy melodrama of Freudian family antics in the Deep South. Intelligently staged, as a showcase for another dazzling performance by Geraldine Page, but it's a long way from *The Little Foxes*. (Dean Martin, Wendy Hiller, Yvette Mimieux; director, George Roy Hill. Panavision.)
- \*\*TRIAL, THE (BLC/British Lion)** More Welles than Kafka, but unfortunately not the best of Welles, so that Joseph K.'s ordeal involves endless disjointed conversations by actors adrift in huge sets. Often like a bad dream; never quite a nightmare. (Anthony Perkins, Jeanne Moreau, Akim Tamiroff.)
- \*VICTORS, THE (BLC/Columbia)** An American infantry-squad on the long trail from Sicily in 1943 to Berlin in 1946. Carl Foreman's anti-war message is rammed home, through anecdotes rather too flimsy for the weight they are forced to bear. (George Hamilton, George Peppard, Eli Wallach. Panavision.) *Reviewed.*
- WHAT A CRAZY WORLD (Warner-Pathé)** Alan Klein's Cockney musical, originally produced at Theatre Workshop, gamely transferred to the screen by Hammer's horror king, Michael Carreras. Some pop songs and a lot of hopeful clichés about teenage layabouts and self-respect. (Joe Brown, Susan Maughan, Marty Wilde, Harry H. Corbett.)
- WOMEN OF THE WORLD (Gala)** The *Mondo Cane* mixture as before, concocted by the same team. A veneer of moralising spread thinly over its leering telephoto lens makes the brew even less appetising. (Director, Gualtiero Jacopetti. Technicolor.)
- WONDERFUL WORLD OF THE BROTHERS GRIMM, THE (M-G-M/Cinerama)** Heavily played by Laurence Harvey and Carl Boehm, the inventive brothers become lost in the Hollywood schmaltz, lightened by flashes of wit in the fairy tales and by Martita Hunt's glowing witch-lady. (Claire Bloom, Yvette Mimieux; directors, Henry Levin, George Pal. Technicolor, Cinerama.)



FEB-MARCH 1964

# CRITICS' CHOICE

NATIONAL FILM  
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Six critics choose six of  
their favourite films

**1 IAN CAMERON**  
Movie

Adieu Philippine  
Angel Face  
Diary of a Chambermaid  
It's Always Fair Weather  
Left Handed Gun  
Viaggio in Italia

**2 JOHN COLEMAN**  
New Statesman

Asphalt Jungle  
Casque d'Or  
Double Indemnity  
Golden Coach  
Odd Man Out  
Sciuscia

**3 DILYS POWELL**  
Sunday Times

Bank Dick  
Maltese Falcon  
Night at the Opera  
Nothing Sacred  
On the Town  
Pat and Mike

**4 JOHN RUSSELL  
TAYLOR**  
The Times

Devil is a Woman  
Hercules Conquers Atlantis  
On Approval  
Torch Song  
Une Simple Histoire  
Vice Versa

**5 ALEXANDER  
WALKER**  
Evening Standard

Alexander the Great  
Bob le Flambeur  
Hand in the Trap  
His Girl Friday  
The Killing  
Young and Innocent

**6 FRANCIS  
WYNDHAM**  
Queen

Big Sleep  
Dames du Bois de Boulogne  
Fallen Angel  
Hot Spot  
Quai des Orfevres  
Ziegfeld Girl

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